Articles, Blog

LS et AJ

January 15, 2025

1 Why do I so rarely talk about politics on my channel? - May 9, 2020

It's not a huge secret that I'm somewhere in the high echelons of the red-pill, however you define it. I'll openly talk about pretty any topic that people organically bring up in streams, or that I'm asked about, but I've never really made any kind of political content on my channel, aside from jokes and memes. That might be surprising because especially three years ago before the mass-bans and algoritm tampering, right wing political channels were a dime-a-dozen and an easily way to get views. **There are two main reasons** I never took part. Arguably "fear of being ZUCCed from YouTube" could be a possible third, but I have a kind intransigence that makes me relish me being banned. I'm also pretty tired of YouTube, and am increasingly questioning if using it is even a reasonable compromise...

So why do I not do political videos? Why do I not have a set list of deep facts that will blow you away and red-pill you? The two reasons:

- Reason one: 道可道,非常道 。名可名,非常名 。
- Reason two: You will need politics less than you think.

Okay, reason one there is just the first line of the Daode Jing. The Daode Jing is the basic book of Daoism (Taoism), and Dao (literally

"Way") is an amorphous concept in Chinese thought that could be crudely comparable to Western concepts of "natural order/law" or maybe even "spontaneous order." **"Sounds gay,"** you say. So what does this famous first line mean and how is it relevant to why I don't talk about how to get red-pilled? I *would* say it's hard to translate, but even saying that would sound even more pretentious as if I actually know classical Chinese as a native language, but here's a rendering.

The Dao (way) that you can follow isn't the true eternal Dao. A name that you speak, isn't its true name.

An aside, it should be a capital offense to translate classical Chinese. It is so perfect and terse and everything autisitically limited to four elegant syllables that it's just criminal to mutilate it into another language, but we'll forgive it this time.

So what do I mean by quoting this? I mean that the journey to getting red-pilled is not something that can be explained. If I could just explain it, tell it to you, it wouldn't be the true story. It is a varied, and in each case, personal journey, that one goes on.

Although you've been lied to, it's not the lies that's the problem. As an adult, you can a lot of the times tell when the media is manipulating you, especially in the last past decade it's gotten so obvious even a Boomer could see it. But what you don't see is how when you were lied to (or told selective truths) as a child, you didn't have the same BS-detector, and that allowed a lot of deep-seated impressions about the world to be formed. So a lot of people who don't believe anything the media says now (rightly) are still mind-cucked. They accept the programming and differ on the details.

I will give you this hint. Basically all of your programmed emotional responses are your enemies. There was an old Moldbug blog post where he talked about even far after "awaking from his dogmatic slumber," he still was surprised that if he saw a group of Nazi LARPers, he would reflexively have a pang of emotional stress, but if he saw Stalinist LARPers, he wouldn't have the same kind of emo-

tional reaction. I think everyone raised in the West has that same programmed reaction. You might know with your head that the communist death count is supposed to be higher and the suppression wider, but it doesn't click because you weren't made sensitive to it.

A good heuristic is whenever you see one of these emotional responses, especially an emotional response to a political term: democracy, equality, racism, feminism, literally all of them actually, **your Pavlovian conditioning is telling you to avoid an intellectual area specifically because it is the ideological weak spot of the background propaganda of modernism.** If it was not a weak spot, there would be no harm in you being allowed to calmly investigate it. People's thoughts are regulated in liberal democracy not by laws, but by psychological programming that goes off when someone is tempted to evaluate an idea they're not supposed to. Okay, actually I guess in Europe they're regulated by that and laws, and it's coming to America very, very soon now.

All of this is to say that breaking out of this programming is not so much of an issue of me or anyone else explaining a series of facts to you. 道可道,非常道。That's what Laozi said. As cringe as it sounds, it is primarily a battle against yourself, or at least the part of yourself that has eaten up the tacit assumptions of modernism. **Before you own the libs, you must own yourself.** Laozi said that too.

In case quoting classical Chinese and talking in floating, general terms isn't getting across, I'll say that getting red-pilled is sort of mystical... literally. Of course, "mystical" in the old, original Greek sense. A "mystic" in Greek is just a synonym for an "initiate." Many cultic religions of two millennia ago where like modern Freemasonry: not a ideology one could just go and read about on Wikipedia, but one where people were slowly *initiated* in the thought and mindset of the religion over time. While people were born into Paganism, they were initiated into Gnosticism, Hermeticism or even early Christianity. The only difference is that you are being initiated out of the cultural bubble

of modernism. Into what? It can vary person to person, experience to experience. You'll always be in some bubble, so don't be arrogant, but you will be out of the big bubble that's going to pop everywhere and is dominated by liberal cat-ladies, professors, sanctimonious NGO-members and journalists.

All of this is to say that it is simply impossible for me to provide you direct direction. Even direction might sound stupid before or after. Maybe I can lay out some random disorganized recommendations.

- Years ago as young college student, I remember reading Steven Pinker's Blank Slate (dl) and thinking I was finally red-pilled. Now I think Steven Pinker is a moron (that book and only that book of his is good, the rest is beyond garbage). I've actually met many people for whom this book was the first step away from basic boomer-tier progressivism. I suspect that Pinker almost regrets writing this book because he's actually very basic in politics. He wrote it back before the elite recognized any threat of a resurgence of energy on the right.

- I think everyone knows that Uncle Ted's manifesto is another favorite on my channel. I never read it until long after I needed it, but since it's a meme now I should recommend it explicitly.

- If you're prepped for harder stuff Radishmag has it. This one tries to evoke that programmed emotional response in a devilish way, but it might be exactly the next step with plenty of actual original sources on historical articles to follow up with.

- Everything Nassim Taleb has written is good. He might be the only living author worth reading now in fact, which isn't saying that much considering our age, but Taleb is pretty based and has attracted a constellation of non-retarded people who employ the very useful concepts he's popularized: antifragile, Lindy, butter-cuck... (okay maybe the last one he didn't coin himself, but I'm

buttercucked and proud). Read his books before you even look up videos of him or shadow him on social media. His books are lucid, but you won't get it based on mere social media. He also has no patience for brainlets.

Also, you can be red-pilled too quickly and end up like that guy in the Matrix who looks like me and betrays his friends so he can be put back in the matrix to have nice juicy steaks again. Did he make an appearance in Runescape as well?

Anyway, I wrote more of this than I thought I was going to, and I **never got to reason two!** I'll write it tomorrow after church. You can read it once you get back from church providing it isn't banned where you live.

Speaking of church, for those interested in early Christian theology, or frankly Greek philosophy generally, notice how similar 名 name/word "míng" in the Chinese above is equivalent to *logos*. In fact, 名 is even used both in the particular sense "the name that you speak" as I render it, and in the universal abstract sense of *logos*. This pun, which doesn't exist in English without some explanation, does exist in both classical Chinese and Greek. More on that later.

2 Politics matters most to slaves.

Now onto the second point I didn't get to in my post yesterday: politics only matters so much when you're a slave. Or as I put it there, "You will need politics less than you think."

That is to say that if you live in a city where your every action is watched, if you use proprietary software and communicate only via social media services, if you have no marketable skills because you have some inert degree and questionably productive and definitely replaceable job and a large company, you need politics quite a great deal.

Your entire existence in the system is based on being a good boy within the established boundaries of what is deemed by the mass media to be socio-politically appropriate. Maybe you've gone into debt, but you *definitely* rely the whole "system" for all the basics. If you don't think you do, just ask yourself whether your life has changed for the better after the Coronachan Panic of 2020.

What's the alternative? Well, boomer rants viewers might see some of this coming...

The fact of the matter is that both the daily ins-and-outs of politics and the overarching trends of politics matter very little the more independent your are of the system. Earlier, I always mumbled about how conservaboomers seemed a little too apathetic about the cultural changes being forced on them. This social engineering still is the most serious problem in all technologically-complex mass-media societies, but I must admit for people who choose personal independence and independence for their families and local communities, it is much less of a problem.

When I was plugged into the system, minorly red-pilled and generally peeved because I actually paid attention to the media as something other than to laugh at, I found the idea of Political "Exit" pretty cucky. How much sense does it make to leave the "political process" altogether? Sounds like giving up.

It sounds like giving up because the "political process" is something internal to the media system at large. That's why even when the political process does something the media doesn't like (like electing the Orange Boomer, for example), its actions are immediately rendered inert by fakery.

The actual solution is creating and participating in organic society, which still very much exists outside the purview of the media and NGOs and the like. People still need plumbers. No one is going to fire a plumber because he says trannies are mentally ill men in dresses—otherwise there'd be no plumbers. Or electricians, or builders or any-

one who actually does anything productive. It'd just be HR, journalists and professors left... and some open source developers who write more codes of conducts than they do software. Do you think they'll be able to feed you?

Exiting the system is actually the opposite of surrender. Why would you think the solution is something like voting or even "owning the libs" or something publicly advertised as a solution? The actual solution is building an alternative. Or maybe rebuilding the alternative.

Do you really want to make your boss rich if you think he'd turn around and betray you because of a media witchhunt? It's better for you to be doxxed and fired now rather than wait 20 years for it, getting more ensconced in the insanity. Start becoming more independent now.

A lot of people LARP about what they're going to do when they take over "the system" by revolution. Revolution, the idea of abrupt enforced change, however, is fundamentally their idea and if you buy it, you're going to keep running your head into a wall.

Being independent, living out of the city and the Matrix, however, is simultaneously like transporting yourself back in time to when things were saner, but at the same time, transporting yourself into the future where "the system" has already collapsed and we're already rebuilding. Be a part of it now rather than later.

3 Hedonism, Asceticism and the Hermetic Answer - Sep 3, 2020

The modern world more or less gives you the philosophical choice of either Hedonism or Asceticism. You never really hear it in those terms, but that's how it is.

Hedonism living for pleasure. Your default lifestyle is eating whatever, watching Netflix and playing video games irrespective of

how late it is. You watch porn, masturbate, have sex as much as you can and any consequences of any of this are just facts of life which you view as either out of your control or worth the suffering. You might not use drugs because you are worried of the hedonistic damage it can cause, but you're at least "chill" with people who do. At a basic level, modern society is hedonistic because it more or less openly holds as highest moral value what can stimulate people the most. You know this is the case because anyone who condemns hedonistic behavior will immediately be judged as "judgemental."

Asceticism is supposed to be the "smart" alternative. Asceticism is rejecting pleasure, normal life and anything else enjoyable in the world as morally inferior to some higher non-physical ideal. Buddhism, which rejects the physical world, has become a popular meme philosophy in the West and is highly acetic. Vegans are acetic: they abandon basic life for their own principles and intense vegans will eventually start talking about "transcending" and "vibrations" and non-sense. Look at the anti-global warming movements and they fall perfectly, almost neurotically into this category. Asceticism come in many forms nowadays, but it is always a reaction to the indulgences of hedonism.

3.1 The Poetic Worldview

Hermes Trismegistus, author of the Hermetic Corpus

The Poetic Worldview is the solution. Don't worry, it has nothing to do with poetry.

The Greek word that poetry/poetic comes from actually is just a generic word for make, create, produce. The word "poetry" originally just meant something like "creative output."

This view is tied into early Platonism and monotheism. The physical universe is a creation or manifestation or "the One" or "the Source" or really [God].dfn. God is the ultimate creator, and an individual is good insofar as [he reflects this creative tendency of God].dfn. We see it expounded in the Hermetic Corpus:

"The other name of God is Father, again because He is the that-

which-maketh-all. The part of father is to make." To Asclepius (17), from the Hermetic Corpus

In the Poetic Worldview, **the highest moral goal is creation.** That can be:

- affecting the world,
- improving what is around you,
- having children,
- making money not to spend it on pleasures, but to make something new and great with it,
- writing or making something useful or edifying for others,
- clearing up misconceptions that get in other people's way in accomplishing these things.

From the Poetic worldview, hedonism is evil because it is expending otherwise creative energy into nothing of consequence. Racking up video-game achievements that no one will ever know or care of but you, watching pornography, pursuing fleeting relationships, impulsively wasting time browsing the internet and fiddling with social media.

This passive and impulsive pleasure-seeking reduces someone's ability to live as intended, instead, they are prisoners to their lusts and conveniences:

"But whatsoever human souls have not the Mind as pilot, they share in the same fate as souls of lives irrational. For [Mind] becomes coworker with them, giving full play to the desires towards which [such souls] are borne,—[desires] that from the rush of lust strain after the irrational; [so that such human souls,] just like irrational animals, cease not irrationally to rage and lust, nor ever are they satiate of ills. For passions and irrational desires are ills exceeding great; and

over these God hath set up the Mind to play the part of judge and executioner." About the Common Mind (4), from the Hermetic Corpus

Hedonism is additionally harmful because it isn't even hedonistic. It's clumsy and self-destructive. Spend your life from ages 16-23 playing videogames, masturbating and smoking weed and you have destroyed your capacity to enjoy life, sex and have normal interactions with normal people. Your capacity for enjoyment ends and you fall into asceticism as a cope.

Asceticism is just as evil because it sees this issue with the hedonistic lifestyle and tosses up its hands in surrender. It internalizes the lie that wasteful and sinful living is somehow obviously funner—when they see they aren't actually having fun, they throw the whole world away.

Most ascetics are liars anyway. They pretend to reject pleasure and worldly things, but they often just seek it in perverted or unconventional ways. There are men who call themselves MGTOW (Men going their own way) who "swear off" women. In reality, most of them are just desperate porn-addicted men who just can't get the girl they want.

Contrary to all of this, having a Poetic view proposes that the more moral and also most enjoyable life is one where one is constantly creating something new out of what he is given. In Hermetic thinking (and, well, Christian thinking) man must hold God as the idea to emulate. Since God's principle feat is creation from nothing, our goal is to celebrate that creation by making something new and productive from the raw materials we have.

Asceticism views the material world *as a mistake or illusion* which leads people to reject life itself. The Poetic view is that the physical world is a reflection of its spiritual state, and what you do in the physical world reflects your spiritual stature.

The Poetic view is somewhat similar to Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, which was an attempt to unite both human and material sciences un-

der the idea that the ideal is maximizing one's output on the external world. Will to Power is a little more morally ambivalent though; it can include destruction, while Poeticism merely values creative power.

3.2 Distractions are literally evil.

This is why *I highly condemn wasteful activities like videogames and pornography and social media.* They are principally habits that divert your natural energies into something absolutely sterile. **Many people ask me "What can I do to be more productive?"** and I have to say that the most important thing is to **remove inert distractions and habits.**

Due to bureaucratic workplaces and bureaucratic education, there are many modern people who *just don't know what it means to be productive.* Most of their lives might be someone trying to fill their day with busywork. Since the normal enjoyable ritual of creative output is unknown to them, this causes a kind of aimlessness and the feelings of inferiority that comes with that.

But in truth, you live at **an ideal period** in that you can have a highly impactful and ergo poetic effect on the world using internet technology and the higher material standard of living. The only trick is to sidestep the distractions of hedonism that turns you into a passive consumer and the apathy of asceticism.

4 The Parable of Alien Chess - Dec 11, 2020

A parable on the Logical Postivist "interpretation" of scientific models.

4.1 The Parable

Suppose an alien race comes to Earth and wants to observe our games. They are very interested in chess, despite the fact that they have eyes with properties that make it impossible to make out what actually happens on a chess board. (The whites and blacks and squares all blur together.)

They can still learn about chess experimentally, they know they can sit two players (a so-called ”white” and ”black” player) down to play it, and they can tell behaviorally who at the end wins.

After extensive experimentation, they realize this: 50% of the time, the white player wins and 50% of the time, the black player wins (we'll ignore draws and any first-move advantage for the example).

4.1.1 The "best" model

A logical positivist alien thus creates the ultimate, long-term model of chess as an iterated game: Chess amounts to just a drawn-out coin flip. Half of the time white wins, half of the time black wins, just as if they were tossing a quarter.

The aliens then decide to model chess as a coin flip, as a 50-50 game with no underlying principles. While this statistical technique might not be useful for predicting a single game, over the long run and over iterated games, *it is the most efficient and parsimonious possible model.*

4.1.2 "Inferior" models

Suppose, however that a "crank" scientist of the alien race posits that "God doesn't play dice" and that chess is a more complicated game, despite the fact that the aliens cannot observe it. Suppose even he asks around and determines from humans that there are actually pieces on the board with functions, and he even devises a machine that allows his alien eyes to see the first move of the game of chess.

Seeing this move allows him to create a new theory and model of the game, one that takes into account the first move made and he tries to generate a new set of probabilities of victory based on that move. The model he makes, is of course highly arbitrary, stipulated and ad hoc. In fact, this model is inferior on many inevitable accounts. For example:

1. It is less predictive over iterated games than the coin flip model.
2. It is not as parsimonious/minimal as the coin flip model.

3. It adds new variables to the theory (pieces) that are suspect.

4.2 Which model is "right?"

4.2.1 Which model is closer to truth?

Since we, unlike the aliens, are not prevented by defect from observing chess, we know that the second, "inferior" theory of chess is truer. Its theoretical categories, if apparently arbitrary in the eyes of the aliens, are getting at the actual underlying mechanics of chess. Even if the model is less effective, it is certainly *righter.*

4.2.2 Which will cause fruitful scientific inquiry?

The coin flip model is a scientific dead-end. Firstly, the coin flip model is constructed statistically, which presents the underlying mechanism to be randomness, and thus unworth of inquiry. This isn't statistics hoisted above random variation we know to exist, instead, it's utterly blind statistics that covers over whatever principles underlie it.

Secondly and more importantly, in order to actually improve that model, it has to *lose* empirical solvency: embracing the abstractions of pieces means introducing mess and deviating in some way from the empircal generalization that half of all chess games are won by white and half by black.

4.2.3 This is not an abnormal circumstance.

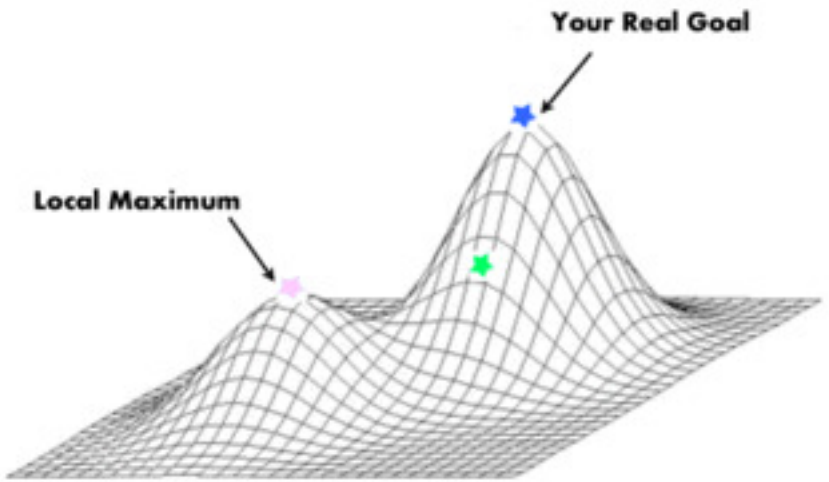
The parable here, really an example is not abnormal. In most affairs in science, whether that be physics or neuroscience or economics or chemistry, we are exactly like the partially-blind aliens.

4.2.4 "But science isn't about truth!"

Yeah, it is dude.

Even if you are pretending that science is about "models" or fitting equations and the like, again, the well-fit model is impossible to perfect, while the flawed, yet more true to reality model does have a potential over the long-term to be a superior one. After exhaustive inquiry, an alien race might not only discover the pieces and the full set of rules behind chess, they might be able to predict what moves are good or bad and predict individual chess games. Even on the standards of mere instrumentalism, the mindless positivistic theory is still actually inferior.

4.3 Local maxima



4.3.1 The plot

One of the ways I visualize science and models is that each model is really like an n-dimensional optimization plot. "Truth," or if you deny truth as metaphysics, "accuracy in data" or "well-fit equations" are upwards and the goal of science is to get further that way.

At the point you're at, you can tell which direction you can go to move upward, or, which little changes you can make to improve your model. That is what incremental science is, after all: don't change assumptions and just fine-tune your equations. The endless fine-tuning is sometimes thought of as "progress." Of course I don't think that this is bad, but it is a very minor and scientifically less important part of science as a whole.

The reality of incremental science is that once you're at a local maximum, once you've fine-tuned your equations about as perfectly as possible, it's over. Everything next to you looks like a disimprovement. It looks just like those inferior theories of alien chess that posit the existence of pieces. From that, you might erroneously conclude that you have found the global maximum, which due to the nature of the complexity of the universe and the multiplicity of possible answers and theories, you flatly haven't.

Logical positivism is kind of theoretical lobotomy that implicitly tells scientists that they should never, ever, ever change foundational assumptions: tweaking equations like an oblivious autist is Science® and everything else is "philosophy" or "metaphysics" or "pseudoscience." This amounts to keeping each scientific field on whatever local maximum is closest, utterly unable to extricate themselves from it even when they see on the horizon abberant data. **If you want to understand the stagnation of science or any other specific field, this is where it comes from.**

4.3.2 Purposefully "bad" science

In Against Method, Paul Feyerabend, in what an unreflective mind might misinterpret as a "troll," says that it is important for science that people have biases, financial interests, interfering religious and political doctrines and the like in science. Looking at the plot, you might now see why. When we are stuck on a local maximum, every new data keeps our already-optimized model where it is no matter how

low that maximum actually is. What you need to shake it up is an external shock that totally moves our theoretical position somewhere new on the plot where we can try to optimize at another point, and then compare.

4.3.3 Basic assumptions

A prudent person should be able to question, "Am I even on the right track or am I playing with some model that has a fundamental flaw?" I can guarantee you, optimizing for data and fitting math and equations is easy. **All theoretical programs are wrong because they make incorrect core assumptions.** This is very hard for the ego of scientists because it means:

1. Possibly illiterate dilettantes on the internet might see and bring to attention legitimate theoretical flaws.
2. All the years you spend in graduate school counting angels on pinheads in your respective theoretical framework is mostly a waste of time.
3. The borders of science are borders more of a sociological club than being the border of raw rigor.
4. Most of the scientific work is not meaningful outside of the theoretical framework that gave rise to it.

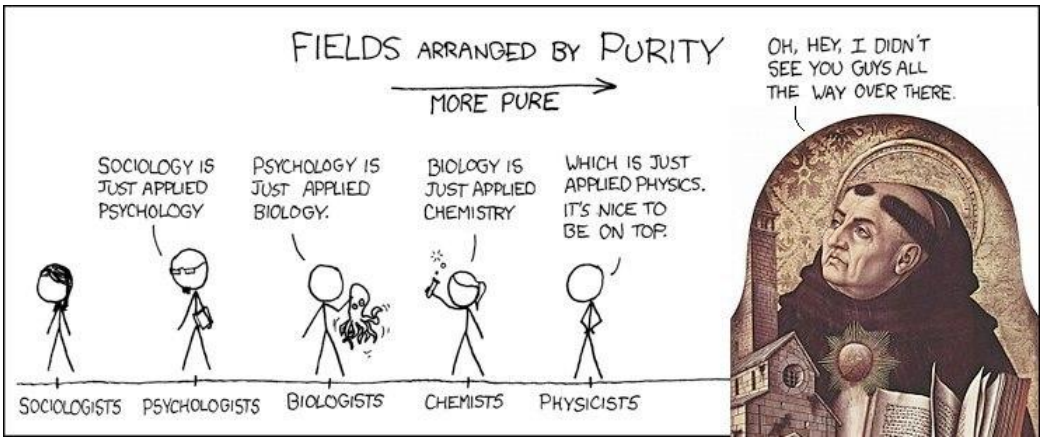
5 The Fragility of Physics

Physics has a reputation of being a uniquely "scientific" field. In other fields, you might hear of the concept of "Physics Envy" which is supposed to be a deep-seated desire of academics of other disciplines for the rigorousness and elegance of physics. Only physics, so the popular understanding goes, is truly able to abstract away from the

messiness of detail and create truly beautiful and solvent models of their subject matters. Physics is thus the queen of the "hard sciences."

I object to the very idea of "hard vs. soft sciences" for reasons that will soon be clear, but I think it is most important to remember that for all its pretensions, **physics is the most fragile science.** That isn't necessarily bad, but it's true.

5.1 Why "fragile?"


FIELDS ARRANGED BY PURITY
MORE PURE
SOCIOLOGY IS JUST APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY
PSYCHOLOGY IS JUST APPLIED BIOLOGY.
BIOLOGY IS JUST APPLIED CHEMISTRY
WHICH IS JUST APPLIED PHYSICS. IT'S NICE TO BE ON TOP.
OH, HEY, I DIDN'T SEE YOU GUYS ALL THE WAY OVER THERE.
SOCIOLOGISTS
PSYCHOLOGISTS
BIOLOGISTS
CHEMISTS
PHYSICISTS

Put simply, physics, partially due to its somewhat abstract nature, is exactly that domain where our interpretation of the universe is *most likely* to change *radically* in the event of any kind of theoretical sea change. That is, while in other more terrestrial sciences, the data is well-known and the theory is in debate, in physics, the opposite is arguably true. In astrophysics, quantum mechanics, the study of gravity or relativity, this should all be obvious.

Even without departing the cuddling embrace of mainstream physics, we can actually see this clearly. What is the ultimate fate of the universe to be? A continuous expansion of the universe until heat death?

Perhaps gravity or some other force will pull everything back in a Big Crunch? The correct alternative is a statement of very specific and tendentious data which changes quite a great deal with any kind of new interpretations of what we see.

It's worth it to remember that for most of man's history, including the initial development of what we nowadays call physics, the "normal state" of the universe was assumed to be the state of affairs we're familiar with on the surface of the Earth: everything falls down to the ground and things propelled in space will slow down until they stop.

But modern physics now looks at the nature of our life on Earth as an exception to the general rule of frictionless and continuous movement in the vacuum of space. A valid question to ask is *how much more that we take to be normal is a special case of reality?* As we encounter more and more abberrant data, such as quantum mechanics, we might soon find ourself unifying seemingly disparate forces in the same was that Newton in a novel and seemingly absurd way the fact that objects fall to the ground with the apparent fact that the Earth orbits the Sun into one new concept: Gravity. Such a unification religates all our universals to a special case.

5.1.1 Does light really go the speed of light?

Physics is fragile because it is like a game of Jenga. Pull out or change one piece and the whole thing is either reordered or simply collapses.

As an example, say that within several years, we realize that the speed of light, for some known or unknown reason, doesn't function with the universality we assumed. Suppose that there is some kind of interaction of light and gravity such that light is faster in some parts of the universe. The reason isn't important. Or suppose we merely find out that in the past, there has been a systematic principle (similar to the Heisenberg Principle) that has miscalibrated all of our measurements of light.

Even if we have minutely mismeasured, the Jenga piece of light will radically alter everthing: our ideas of how old the universe is, our relationships with other planets, the solvency of general relativity, etc. You might say that there is a "concordance of evidence" that attests to our single known speed of light, but another way of putting that is that we have many other things tied into our interpretation of light that will have to change if we realize our models of it are flawed.

5.1.2 Poverty of data

Especially in the astronomical domain, it's worth remembering exactly how circumstantial our ideas of space are. We sometime speak of the traits of other solar systems' planets as if we've been there. But in reality, astrophysicists guess the chemical compositions of foreign planets based on their light frequencies and other fragile data. Any systematic error in observation over those thousands or millions of lightyears and we have been counting angels on pinheads the whole time.

People have the idea that because astrophysicists make extraordinary claims about planets, galaxies and time periods far beyond our mortal ken that they must have extraordinary evidence for them. That is frankly not the case. We have a piece-meal and jury-rigged set of circumstantial reasoning leading us to these claims. Seeing them computerized in full color in a science documentary doesn't make them more real. It just makes them look more official.

5.2 Physics vs. "soft sciences"

I remember talking to someone over the internet who accused me of having a low view of institutionalized science and being a dreaded epistemological anarchist because one of my degrees is in the "soft science" of linguistics. While I have a lot of bad things to say about the current state of linguistics, as a field, it is substantially more

advanced and its findings are substantially more solid than physics. At that, formalizing ideas in math doesn't just make something a better or a more rigorous science anyway, which is the assumption of many people have.

While linguistics undergoes theoretical changes every several generations, the data, or really more importantly the phenomenology of linguistics is as secure as ever across all theoretical frameworks. That is, we know how language works. We can see abstract relationships between morphemes and syntactic structure. Even if we totally rewrite our narratives and theories about linguistic basics, there is no debate about the structure of language and how basic data relates to other data. This is absolutely the opposite of physics.

Physics is pretty solid on earth, and solid when you are running objects at each other in a vacuum, but once we broach the territory of astrophysics, relativity, gravity and more or less anything else that we as humans lack direct intuition of most of the "facts" of physics are theory-internal facts, and will fade away or be rendered obsolete when the next theoretical fad comes around.

5.3 My standard for theoretical frameworks

I think any serious scholar needs the ability to operate cognitively with multiple different theoretical frameworks in mind.

For example, (on linguistics) I don't really take Generative Grammar very seriously, in fact, despite it being on of the most well-funded dialects of linguistics nowadays, it's pretty inert. Despite that, I view it as very important for me to be able to process linguistic problems within Generative Grammar and word explanations within its ideas. It's nice to be able to say to someone "this alternation is accounted for if this DP occupies the spec of CP." I don't believe in CPs or specifiers as being psychologically real, but I can recognize the language as communicative.

A good theoretical framework is one that can produce

facts and observations that can be recognized and explained outside of its framework as well.

That is, a framework should cue us in to finding utterly novel observations and thus a new phenomenology. This goes against the egocentric motivations of a lot of scientific frameworks whose practitioners are trying to edge out "the competition." Fields that spend most of their time trying to formalize previous observations within their own theoretical language are mostly a waste of time (this is Generative Grammar, frankly, although due to historical ignorance, many people in GG do not know they are re-treading steps).

One of the biggest issues of modern post-war institutionalized science is that the funding and peer-review mechanism is self-reinforcing: all fields converge to be "unipolar": only one methodology or framework is deemed "scientific." This creates a community of "scientists" who are more an more incestuous and generally oblivious not just to other possibilities of inquiry, but don't even have to be aware of their own priors or assumptions.

5.4 The blinders of positivism

As I've interacted with physicists more, I'm often surprised by how irrelevant they think even the most basic theoretical awareness is. That's "philosophy" for them. It's not uncommon to hear zingers like these:

1. "Science isn't about truth, it's about creating models."
2. "Physics is about fitting equations."
3. "We don't do philosophy."

Things like these are said as if they are some kind of statement of universal and well-consented-to truth, when in reality they are absurd Zen koans of the positivist religion. This was a loony opinion a

hundred years ago and people saying these things now know that they are ludicrous. They have just become identifying marks of the social club.

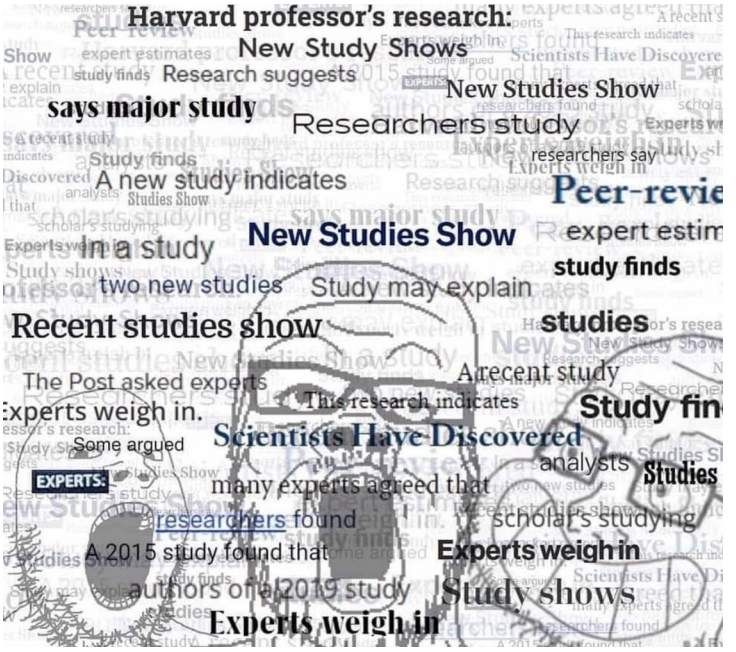
Yep, science is about creating models... models that replicate reality, i.e. Truth.

A scientists who doesn't do philosophy isn't a scientist: he's a meter-reader. A philosopher who doesn't do science isn't a philosopher: he's just a stoner. The attempt to sever these two words from each other is part of the problem.

Physicists seem to be particularly touchy on this point. On one hand, they insist that philosophy is "not their thing" and "not related." On the other hand, they get incredibly angry when anyone else dares to either put the methodology of modern physics to any kind of philosophical tests or even to look into philosophical ramifications of their work.

In reality, modern scientists and positivists have their own metaphysics, it is just an implicit one that they advertently or inadvertently sneak into their theories. They can only do it because its clumsy sterile "materialism" is the background-radiation of the modern world.

6 Science vs. Soyence



There's nothing necessarily wrong with science, reason, knowledge etc. To some degree, they're fundamental for survival in this world in one way or another. But one of the more worrisome problems which have arisen since the Enlightenment, and especially in the past several years, is the fact that whenever scientific knowledge has increased, human arrogance has accelerated even faster. This isn't a metaphysical, moral arrogance; it's one that is more and more jeopardizing the human cosmos.

We live in a pop-scientific and pop-technological world. Because common people are constantly weighing themselves down with new gadgets and state-of-the-art genetically engineered food, there's a tendency to want to pay homage to the amorphous blob of "knowledge."

Of course, much like the Greek Gods, we cannot seem to speak to "knowledge" directly, or to mentally murky academics, but only to official mediators: journalists and "science communicators" and the like.

The religious metaphor is intentional. Of course the actual view of Popperian science is that scientific "advancement" is less of an increase in knowledge than a decrease in falsity. We can never be sure of what is true, but we can gradually establish what is false and contradictory; science does exclusively the latter. Real scientific work refutes and calls into question established fact and is in a constant self-regeneration. Facts mean nothing in themselves.

And scientific models, from our models of the atom, to models of the Earth's weather and climate, to models of our body are highly circumstantial, and as a rule, will nearly all inevitably be proven false. Theories are the narratives we cast over facts which have not yet been ruled false. We know nearly nothing of how the brain works. Sure, we know there are synapses, and we know what brains end up doing in some circumstances, but we haven't begun to scratch the surface of how a brain is actually engineered (computational models be damned). The same is true of the human body and is especially true of human society.

Now Neil deGrasse Tyson has the annoying mantra that he repeats at every possible opportunity, which goes something like: "the good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it." First off, I don't know what's good about that; it'd be pretty damn convenient to live in a world where we could imagine away gravity or CO2 or cancer, but aside from this, science, actual science as a critical methodology is manifestly not true and is not the truth. Science is a way of marginally approaching truth by discovering falsity, and in most endeavors, this approachment is so marginal as to be inert in all our daily lives. There is nothing to "believe in" in science anyway, because it's an exposer of non-truth.

But in pop-science, Science® is "knowledge" and deviation from the scientific catechism is "irrational." It's not just irrational to dispute consensus, but irrational *to fail to implement it in your personal life.*

6.1 In Practice

The greatest danger of pop-science is the unquestioned assumption that life should be led "scientifically." That we should "look for evidence," "question everything," and universally "challenge authority" (unless that authority is a professor). The problem should be blatantly obvious in hindsight.

An obvious example: in the 20th century, Western societies had to deal with the very real problem of a bizarre increase in lung cancer rates. We "know" now that smoking tobacco and other substances apparently cause drastically higher lung cancer rates, but this was lost on the people at the time.

The relationship between smoking and cancer was highly circumstantial; there were some statistical correlations established, but as any pop-science guru will tell us "correlation is not causation!" For decades, scientifically minded people looked for evidence while millions more died. Smoking companies took refuge in the fact that there was no mechanism understood behind how smoking could cause lung cancer. With all scientific rigor, they insisted for decades that the increase in lung cancer was due to something else, or merely an increase in diagnosis capacity. And *they were on the side of scientific skepticism*!

Only now that there is some understanding of how carcinogens in smoke can damage the lungs can we say that the "scientific consensus" is that smoking causes lung cancer. Cute, but if people had been *"irrationally" cautious*, the human tragedy would've been substantially mitigated.

The problem is that "looking for evidence" before acting or nonacting is personally and socially dangerous. In nearly all circum-

stances, our intuition (crafted by millions of years of evolution) or social norms (which keep us to established safe routes) are much better guides to life than the scientific consensus, despite them being "irrational" (and sorry, religion is part of this too). When someone guzzles down some newly fabricated energy drink or gallons of soda, they're nearly certainly damaging their bodies in ways science does not yet understand. Don't wait 40 years for some longitudinal peer-reviewed study to prove that eating plastic is bad for you. Trust your instincts before you give credence to some YouTuber who says inane things like "There's no evidence that..."

My favorite little "irrationality" that we all commit is of course, sleep. After millennia of trying to understand it, there is no established scientific reason or justification for why humans "need" sleep. Sure there are hypotheses (memory processing, repair, maybe even something Freudian), but none close to common currency. In the words of one of the world's most prominent sleep researchers, William Denent, "As far as I know, the only reason we need to sleep that is really, really solid is because we get sleepy." Of course the absence of logical evidence to the necessity of sleep keeps no NdGT fan from wasting their time on the "Bronze-Age Myth" of the importance of sleep.

6.2 (Not) (Mis-)Understanding Complex Systems

The human body is a complex system in which every "system" is overlapping, somewhat redundant, all-affecting and fundamentally beyond linear analysis. Our scientific studies can find binary variables that correlate with a low p value, but that tells us nothings about what's actually going on and nothing about the underlying mechanisms. Again, the same is true of the human brain and the same is true of human *society*. Nothing is a simple input-output system.

What this means is that basically nothing from the world of pop-science can ever affect the basics of our lives because the interaction

of our component parts are just non-amenable to any kind of generalizations that make intuitive sense to us. Everything we do affects our bodies in ways we can't predict so the proper strategy is always an "irrational" precaution and avoidance of novelty.

Things, of course, get especially touchy when talking about the "rational" management of society. Every good denizen of the post-Enlightenment world, even most of those on the "Right" have the idea that the economy and social relationships are simple one-to-one hydraulic systems that can be managed like a little steam engine. Now we've been rationally managed to hell and not back (and the solution is always more rational management).

The terrible truth is that traditional social norms are irrational and still do exist for a reason in the perennial gale of social evolution. Social change and social progress (note the lack of scare quotes) have always been happening, but only now do we have the naive idea that the units of society (people) have the competence to design and contribute to an otherwise unconscious evolution of social memes.

Anyway, I'll give the last word on this issue to Noam Chomsky, who somehow manages to say something clear and admirable on the subject:

> *"Science is a very strange activity. It only works for simple problems. Even in the hard sciences, when you move beyond the simplest structures, it becomes very descriptive. By the time you get to big molecules, for example, you are mostly describing things. The idea that deep scientific analysis tells you something about problems of human beings and our lives and our inter-relations with one another and so on is mostly pretense in my opinion—self-serving pretense which is itself a technique of domination and exploitation and should be avoided. Professionals certainly have the responsibility of not making people believe that they have some special knowledge that others can't attain without special*

means or special college education or whatever. If things are simple, they should be said simply; if there is something serious to say that is not simple, then, fine, that's good and interesting. We can perhaps find deep answers to certain questions that do bear directly on issues of human interest and concern, but that is rarely true."

6.3 "'Science' 'Communicators'"

One of the worst aspects of all of this is that this understanding of pop-science encourages people to distrust what they know or can judge of the world in favor of the caricature of the consensus of institutionalized academics. People have this idea that there are these intellectual, peer-reviewed demigods in universities who discover the secrets to the universe and communicate them through their messengers stationed at BuzzFeed and the Huffington Post. Betraying their infinite wisdom would make you "irrational" or a "fundie." The reality is that these demigods really just went to graduate school because they were lazy and initiativeless, and even in the abstract, most of their real work has nothing to do with your life whatsoever. It's only the messengers that convince you of that because it stimulates their power trip.

Science journalists, much like journalists generally, are people too incompetent and emotional to work in the private sector, too dumb to be academics (and the standards are abysmally low these days), too full of themselves to work in charity and too bumbling, weak and arrogant to work in a blue collar or manual occupation. Journalism is an attractive career to many because it demands the least rigor and honor and promises the greatest power and influence.

Their self-ordained duty is to overwhelm the public with a confusion of "studies" that increasingly seem to micromanage a neurotic person's life. "Studies show that" classical music may help infant brain growth, or that gluten ravages the intestines, or that simply owning more books causes higher scholastic achievement, or that Vi-

tamin C or antioxidants or kale or whatever health-food de jour solve all the world's problems.

At the end of the day, the worst part is that we talk about "science" as if it's some kind of anthropomophic creature with desires and feelings and a plan for us all. It's a uniquely modern flaw to say things like, "Science tells us that..." "Science is about.." "Science is against..." Does this not strike anyone else as creepy? The interpretation of science forced on the public is a scriptural one, where law to live life by are codified in "peer-reviewed" journals and communicated by intermediaries. 'Science's' purview is infinite and any failure to conform is some congenital failure or reason.

7 Only Use Old Computers!

The ideal ThiccPad

If there is a single point of advice I can offer novice computer users, it is stop using modern computers.

If you look at ”technology YouTube,” by which I mean the massive multi-million subscriber channels, nearly all of it is devoted to constantly reviewing and comparing every new computer, processor, graphics card and product. There’s big money in it because obviously

all of these companies put money in it, but also if you're a normal person, you automatically assume you need the "best" technology.

7.1 Do you need a modern computer?

Absolutely not. More than 95% of people could be using a computer from 2008 or before without any problems. Needing a recent machine is limited to people who:

1. Do extreme, professional, processor-intensive video-rendering.
2. Compile massive programs and operating systems with severe time constraints.
3. Play recent triple AAA video-games on high settings.
4. Use many massive Electron apps and other inexcusably bad software written by soydevs and other people who shouldn't be writing software.

The last two reasons aren't really real reasons at all because they are totally unnecessary and avoidable things.

But to the point, watching YouTube videos and using a word processor does not require last month's new release.

Every video I upload, I transcode for settings optimal for YouTube, meaning I render each video I record. On my computer from a decade ago, that still takes only a couple minutes. A fancy $5000 computer might be able to do it in less than one, but it is honestly not worth the pain associated with modern computers.

7.1.1 How much should a computer cost a normal person?

Either nothing or just around $200, I say. I use a ThinkPad X220 I got for $90 on eBay. Before that, I used another ThinkPad X220 I also got for $90. Like anything else, if you are buying things on Amazon, you're doing it wrong.

7.2 The Pain of Modern Computers

7.2.1 Modern computers are more breakable

As computing has become more and more popular, companies have started to realize that a consumer's first reaction on having their $5 wifi card die is immediately buy a whole new computer. This means two things: (1) they don't bother to make computers easy to repair, in fact, they make it more difficult and (2) there is absolutely no need to make computers durable at all. In fact, it's probably better to let computers break so you'll get yet another sale.

Apple is by far the most anti-social computing company because of this. I'll let the larger tech channels show you the specifics, but every Apple product is brilliantly designed to make it difficult to fix very basic and otherwise fixable problems. They have quite a racket licensing out the ability and tools to companies that want to fix their terrible hardware. Apple even used pentalobe screws just so normal people couldn't open their computers up with a typical screwdriver. Of course nowadays every other computer manufacturer imitates the Apple style where apparent "sleekness" is supposed to be a signal of high quality.

7.2.2 Modern computers are increasingly monitoring devices and come with proprietary junk.

The Management Engine

You might've heard that all Intel i3/i5/i7 processors (that is, after the Intel Core 2 Duo) have an onboard alternate processor that is meant to function as spyware. This is called the Intel Management Engine. It can view your memory and connect to the internet: basically all modern computers have this permanent back door. In older computers, say the ThinkPad X200, you can, with a little hardware action, remove the other processor and replace the proprietary BIOS with Libreboot or Coreboot, but that is not possible on more modern

computers (you can install Coreboot on a more modern machine, but not all of the components of the Management Engine are removed).

More recent computers, however are non-removable spyware by design and, yes, the NSA can monitor any machine with a Management Engine. There are actually even rumors that one of the taps that the FBI under the Obama administration put on Trump during his campaign was a Management Engine bug.

Note that AMD (Ryzen) processors have what they call a "Platform Security Processor" that is equivalent to the Intel Management Engine, so you're not escaping the issue by using one of them.

NVIDIA

Again, unless you play modern videos alone all day, you literally have no reason to have a modern computer, especially one with an expensive graphics card. NVIDIA is a great example because they make graphics cards and develop proprietary drivers for them to make it harder and harder to use them on machines that aren't running whatever the most recent spyware variant of Windows 10 is. Linux works perfectly on all computers ancient and modern, but if you plug some NVIDIA thing up to it, you might lose your screen or not be able to boot. A lot of gaymers whine about their NVIDIA products "not working" on Linux without realizing **that is by design**. NVIDIA and other companies and all CPU designers go out of their way to keep their source code and standards private which makes their products tangibly worse because it is harder for other parties to write drivers for them. Why? Because most of them have partnerships with Microsoft.

7.3 The Problem of Windows

How many times have you heard a normie explain to you that their computer is slow because it's "really old" and they bought it "way back in 2015?" It's an absurd statement of course. Computers don't just get magically slow... **...unless they've been running Windows.**

In the future, once even Microsoft has switched over to a purely Unix-based backend for their operating system, we're all going to have a good laugh about how Microsoft Windows, *literally the worst and least functioning operating system ever devised*, was the largest consumer market share for decades.

I might go into how Windows is poorly designed in another page or video, but I want to be clear that there is no such loss of speed on any Linux distribution, which is what you should be using. I am one of the first to complain about the feature bloat of the Linux kernel and Linux software, but compared to Windows, it's no contest: **Linux runs fast on old hardware**. You'll know from some of my videos, however, that I'm not big into "Linux Evangelism," mostly because it's sort of strident and doesn't really work with a high success rate. Using Linux is just something that normies have been immunized against (mostly because "It's what smart people do"), but I always find myself in a position where someone's Window installation has permanently crashed and they're at the awkward decision of having to buy a license to reinstall the dysfunctional and slow operating system they've grown to hate.

There is quite literally no problem that normal people have with computers that is not immediately alleviated by installing Linux.

7.4 Why do people use ThinkPads?

As I said above, I use a X220 ThinkPad. Older ThinkPads are fairly popular among people who think and care about doing things effectively and economically on a computer. Why is this?

ThinkPads were always designed for enterprise environments, meaning the financial incentives for the manufacturer are not always planned obsolesce, but a long-standing reputation among large companies of having durable, fixable and expandable machines.

To replace a hard drive on the X200 requires unscrewing just a single screw. Same to replace the memory. To replace a spoiled key-

board is no more than three screws. Modern laptops, including the degraded modern ThinkPad have abandoned this simplicity and opt for the Apple-Mac/cell phone design technique of making batteries, memory and the rest functionally soldered and irremovable.

7.4.1 How far can $500 go?

Over the years, I've had many things break on my laptops, but since I've been using ThinkPads, it is incredibly easy to keep a working computer even after rough use. I estimate that I have never spent more than a combined total of $500 on computers, which is usually a bare minimum for what someone can buy a "modern" laptop for nowadays.

When the keyboard on my ThinkPad breaks, I can just buy a replacement keyboard for $30 or $40 and replace the old one much easier than any other model. That's the modularity of these computers.

Even in the worst case scenario when something on the motherboard makes the computer unbootable, I still get to keep my "broken" ThinkPad and repurpose the memory, wifi card, keyboard and everything else. I still have some parts of every laptop I've had just because they do come in a lot of use. The other month, a friend's wifi on his desktop went out and I could replace it with one of my old ThinkPad modules.

This is the kind of thing you lose with modern computers. This is purposeful on the part of manufacturers, and it's important not to pay them huge amounts of money to incentivize this behavior. It's very easy to live off of 10 year old computers nowadays. The eBay-and-etc resale market is massive even thought many of us have gotten wise to the value of these old computers.

8 Notes on Learning Languages

I get asked a lot about learning languages, so I have a few comments about it here. Hopefully I can awaken you from some dogmatic slumbers about language.

8.1 Vocabulary is the least important part of learning a language.

This is hard for people to understand because I think most monolingual people think that languages are just different word lists that people use. As a result, 101 students will manually look up every word in the dictionary to translate. This actually increases the mental load of learning a language because people have the idea that to speak it, they have to think of something in English, then translate the sentence word by word, then say that. What a pain.

So what is a language if not words? It really is a set of constraints as to how words can go together: what order they go in when modifying each other, but also languages are morphology. Verb endings and tenses and such are literally the most important part of a sentence. If you don't have a productive and reflexive use of verbs, you are literally just going to be reciting nouns you know like a monkey.

This is actually why I recommend people learning Romance languages or German to use Michel Thomas's audio. Thomas doesn't lecture at all about what he's doing, but he focused only on using verbs and building up basic expressions from the bottom up until it's understood reflexively by students. To actually learn any language, this is more or less what you are going to have to mentally do anyway in the process.

I would say it's actually possible to fluently speak a language knowing only about 50 words. If you understand the "grammar" of a language, you can basically get by anywhere anytime with a couple dozen words only. What words you don't know can

easily be figured out, but you can't wing it with grammar and you can't wing it with morphology.

8.1.1 Computer metaphor

Granted, the same is true of programming "languages" as well, weirdly enough. No one would think "knowing a [computing] language" means just knowing all the function and variable names. The important thing is knowing the syntax of how you put functions (loosely verbs) and variables (loosely nouns) together. After all, variable names are always different and functions can be easily invented too or called from some obscure library. Someone who knows a language is someone who can use its syntax to produce novel expressions. If you take a Python script, replace its functions with C functions, it's still Python, just calling a bunch of undefined functions. People can only get away with even sort of believing this in the domain of human languages if you just don't know enough and end up assuming that all languages just work the same.

8.2 Then what is a language?

So really when you learn a language, you can't look at it as new words, but new patterns of speech that interconnect in a logical way.

Speaking fluently in that language means being able to use and combine its basic constructions into complex thoughts put in words. This is why I'm really against "translating in your head." If you're doing that, you're not actually using the language. You're teaching yourself a silly English-word-replacement game. I know it's very hard for word-thinkers not to think in words, but if you can't stop doing that for a second, you're not going to be able to learn a new language.

8.3 You will not learn a language by consoooming media.

There's this lazy idea that somehow if you passively sit around and watch people using a language this will somehow endow you with the ability to flexibly produce a language in the same way you see others using it. People want to believe it because they want to be able to watch TV or play a cell phone game like Duolinguo or valueless Rosetta Stone-like software and somehow gain competence in a language.

It's not going to happen ever. **Learning to play a boring computer game using words from a different languages is not the same as learning to speak the language.**

You might say of "just listening to speech" that "that's what children do," but that's not true at all. Children try pretty hard to participate and understand conversation. They sometimes have a desperate personal need to understand each passing sentence and hear the language they are trying to learn for hours a day for years. You watching some forgettable movie in the background as you play with your phone don't.

8.4 Are you actually thinking?

If you want to know if you are actually learning a language, ask yourself that. People are weirdly afraid against actually thinking through things and making new expressions in other languages when that's exactly how you learn them.

A lot of language nerds love to email me about their Anki cards or their harebrained schemes for mass-memorizing words as if they're an Asian studying for a chemistry test. Given what I've said about "learning words," you can guess my opinion on that. Once people abandon the lazy route, sometimes they take up the via dolorosa: the route of suffering and assume that training themselves like a Pavlovian dog will help them become fluent in a language.

In reality, the only question that matter is: "Are you actually thinking?" Are you actually going through the mental process of creating new sentences in a new language?

When I was learning Latin obviously I had no Latin-speaking friends and could barely get my hands on anything Latin-related. But after I learned the basics of the language I started thinking in it constantly. First that starts in my always implicitly translating English song lyrics or ads in my head into Latin. That's actually difficult if you're dealing with something modern and idiomatic. Not as bad with church songs. As time goes on, I would overtly remember things in Latin sentences instead of English. If I mumbled something under my breath I would make sure it was Latin. At all points in time, I was thinking about how the language was structured and what it meant to produce sentences in it.

The sad fact is that most people who "learn" languages in school treat them as advanced cross-word puzzle like games where they don't actually think in the language, but have hilarious mnemonic devices in their head for relating what they want to say in English with something in the language they're learning.

8.5 Translating is a bad habit.

If anything, you should become worse at translating the further you go on and the more independently you can stand on your own in another language.

Latin is a good example. I can read and comprehend Latin very well, but if asked to translate what I'm reading, I find that more and more difficult the better I read Latin. Now it's easy for me to report the meaning of a passage, but phrase-by-phrase translation is something you have to think through because Latin and English are structurally very different. This isn't just word order, but even how a Latin speaker approaches expressions and the kinds of phrases they use can translate only very delicately into English.

The problem nearly doesn't exist between English and Spanish, which are basically the same language. I'm sure someone who only knows Spanish will feel like English and Spanish have many differences, but in the context of other languages, like Latin or Chinese or Japanese, it's hard not to view English and Spanish as having basically the same kind of syntax 95% of the time. That actually goes for most modern European languages.

8.6 You sound stupid if you don't sound stupid.

Every language has its own set of phonological rules that determine what particular sounds are said how and where. Phonological rules give us "our accents." When someone speaks English in an accent, they are really just speaking English using the phonological constraints of whatever language they're more familiar with. If they speak English competently, there's at least some extent to which they are abandoning their native phonological rules.

When you first start learning a language, you might read something aloud and say "I sound stupid." This is because your natural way of speaking is obviously to say everything with an accent consistent with English. You can probably remember the apathetic jock in Spanish class or whatever who religiously pronounced every Spanish word he mindlessly read with an almost intentionally non-Spanish accent.

To actually speak another language is to adopt the phonological tendencies and even the prosodic and tonal traits of that language. When you initially do that, you will probably sound very stupid to yourself since violating phonological rules you're familiar with always sounds wrong. If you do overcome that illusion of felt stupidity, you won't sound stupid when it counts. If you refuse to improve your accent immediately and from the beginning you will sound like an utter moron forever.

There's actually a trick too: when you imitate a foreign accent, you are actually implicitly adopting the phonological rules of their

language that you have noticed in real life. My suggestion is when you are starting out, read the other language in what you'd guess would be a stereotypical accent of the person speaking the language. If your imitation is good, you're speaking their language without an accent.

8.7 "The Critical Period" is fake.

That reminds me.

There's an idea in academic and clinical linguistics as well as popular culture that children have a magical plasticy of the brain that makes them uniquely good at learning languages. This is supposed to be the reason why children learn languages "fast" and adults don't. I think this is a myth. You don't have to send me all the "proof" about this (don't worry, the Universities of Georgia and Arizona would've failed me totally if I hadn't seen it for my linguistics degrees there). I sort of assumed that this was true for years, but on further thought, I think it's just a conspiracy of irrelevant data and copes... or at least, it's not nearly as true as people pretend it is: adults are just about as capable of learning languages in most senses.

After all, think about it, children actually take several years to function in a language, which is often much longer than an adult that knows what he's doing. The Michel Thomas style tapes which I alluded to above are good at giving an adult a passable diving-board for a language in about 8 hours. It can be done. You can also give an adult a crash-course in phonology and articulatory phonetics that will make it easy to understand and with practice produce the sounds children take years to master.

The motivation of a child and adult are utterly different. A languageless child has lots of reasons to invest most of his mental life in attention to language. Apathetic adults don't.

What I really get sick of is doomer adults who cope with their laziness by talking about how hard it is to learn a language as an adult.

Many adults still learn languages all the time. There is some circumstantial evidence that infants cue into some acoustic cues and other things quicker than adults, but I think in most cases we're just looking at infants semi-consciously honing in on what details they've acknowledged to be linguistically relevant. In reality, developed humans have huge institutional and intellectual advantages to learn.

9 Consciousness and Materialism - Jan 16, 2023

9.1 Hume's Parallel

David Hume has often been quoted for his *"Is" vs. "Ought"* distinction. The argument is that fact and morality are two different domains, and from no accumulation of statements of fact alone can we ever jump to a statement of morality.

We can say statements of fact such as:

1. To be murdered is potentially painful.
2. To be murdered is irreversible.
3. Murder causes social dysfunction.
4. Etc.

By merely my collecting these, we haven't proven that Murder is evil. That is an entirely different statement that cannot be inducted from statements about the description of murder.

Certainly we can derive moral statements from other moral statements accompanied by factual statements. For example, if we assume that the moral statement To kill a living being is immoral. we can derive new moral "facts" from it:

1. To kill a living being is immoral.

2. Unborn children in the womb are living beings.

3. Abortion is immoral.

Or…

1. To kill a living being is immoral.

2. Animals are living beings.

3. Killing animals is immoral.

Whether you find Hume's argument ironclad, it proposes that mere fact and morality are ultimately two domains and substances, and while they can interact, importantly, morality itself—whatever it is—is made of different stuff than just empirical statements. There requires some extra jump.

9.2 Consciousness

I bring this up because it is a logical analog to the reality of consciousness.

Some would incorrectly say that the issue of consciousness is the "Hardest Problem in Science." That's premature because it presupposes that science *has even* begun to properly ask the question, or has any idea of a vector to approach the issue, or any tools to attack the problem.

One funny thing, even—perhaps especially true about the institutionalized academic venues for the study of consciousness, is that they are rife with "pseudoscience."

Go to a "scientific" conference or institute and however many serious scientists you see, you will find no fewer Hindu gurus. This is because there are simply no scientific methods for even approaching the issue of the origin and nature of consciousness and many scientists are at least honest enough to recognize they have little to no

performative advantage in the field over pagan lore or even esotericist scammers.

9.2.1 Consciousness from a Humean Perspective

In the same way that Hume argued that morality must be a different substance from fact, I will state flatly that consciousness, in its essence, must be a totally different substance from matter.

Materialist science is self-limited to what is ultimately the syntactic interactions of atoms more or less bumping into each other, at whatever level of abstraction. In the same way that Hume could say that no as-of-yet unknown facts could generate a foundational moral statement, I say that no as-of-yet unknown material configuration generates this ontologically new category of self-perception.

Now when Hume, as a skeptic, suggested that fact and morality were different domains, a part of that skepticism is the suggestion that morality, since it is not grounded in fact, might actually just be a worthless enterprise. That "solves" the philosophical problems of morality by saying it ultimately has no independent ontology, i.e. it doesn't really exist, so we don't really have to talk about it.

Consciousness cannot be discarded in the same fashion. Consciousness is not just something we observe, but it is the only thing we observe. It is the basis of all of our other observations and it is the most inexplicable thing.

9.2.2 Mere computation?

You might interpret my statement here as a denial of the so-called *Computational Theory of Mind* which, among other things, alleges that consciousness itself is a side-effect of the configuration of the brain to compute and process reality.

After all, computation is merely the processing rules of a formal game. Saying computational operations can generate consciousness

by themselves is no sillier than saying that a game of Monopoly can generate consciousness. (There are some who have argued themselves into corners where they will affirm that such Monopoly games can be conscious).

It might be that some syntactic configurations might resonate in such a way to "summon" consciousness from another dimension. That is not my point, my point is the more obvious one: consciousness itself, qualia, sense in itself are obviously something different than matter.

There's an unfortunate temptation to describe things that consciousness seems to interact with or do or correlate with, mistaking that to be an explanation of the sensation of consciousness itself. To do that is to forget the question altogether, replacing it with something trivial.

9.3 Matter over Mind?

To be clear, it is very obvious that material conditions *affect* consciousness. This is no different from how Hume admitted that factual statements can affect derivations of moral statements.

Chemicals can induce other states of consciousness. Injuries can affect the state of self-perception.

For a while I assumed the error of thinking that because these statements were true, that must mean that consciousness itself must be merely material as well.

This is fallacious reasoning because we can just as easily say that the physical components of the brain are "receivers" of a "signal" of consciousness.

In the same way that smashing a T.V. doesn't destroy the signal it receives, damaging the brain or distorting its physical reactions in such a way to affect consciousness doesn't mean the consciousness itself has an origin in the physical brain.

That might sound other-worldly, as if it entails consciousness must be something from another dimension, but it's even similar to the way

people approach their *non-solutions* in the Computational Theory of Mind.

9.4 Other-worldly

I will say that I have come to grips with the idea that consciousness must be something literally other-worldly.

Before pan-physicalists and atheists throw their computers aside in disgust, remember that this is almost a tautology or truism, and it is really the essence of my argument here. It also doesn't even require any more metaphysics than are required to remain consistent.

Physicalism and materialism assume that the core of the universe is familiar atomic matter and other physical forces and energies. Consciousness is simply something ontologically apart from these things.

In making philosophically physicalist models for consciousness, we are trying to build paper-flat two-dimensional scaffolding to hold an immensely oblong three-dimensional object. That might teach us something about consciousness in a pedagogical sense, but the operations of atoms and forces are just different stuff than consciousness and even with clever emergent arguments, never suffice to explain it.

It is one thing to say that complex computational systems can emerge from simple interactions of matter. This is a mere issue of complexity. It is a totally different thing to say that the very realm of the cognitive theater, including qualia and sense itself are mere complex atom-bumpings. This is an addition of that same third dimension.

While nearly everything in the universe can be attacked with a materialist model, and even though we can correlate matter with conscious states, the appearance of the qualia of things in the mind is not just something we can reduce to material corollaries, because the material corollaries are not the interesting or crucial aspect.

9.4.1 You're already a dualist anyway.

There is an obvious sense in which even a rigid materialist should realize the wide scope of the universe is pretty wide, nearly certainly wider than we now anticipate.

Familiar matter and energy has formed the physical sciences, but that in no way means that part of, in fact, most of reality is actually other types of forces and substances.

Remember that modern materialism before used to be "mechanicalism." Before Newton, many thought that atoms alone were sufficient to describe reality, specifically, atoms exerting direct force on one another.

Newton proposed an elegant theory that was involved an occult force: *Gravity* that acted counter-mechanically over long distances via an unknown—and still totally unknown—means. The theory solved significant problems and unified much, but its central assumption was other-worldly and totally unjustified and unexplained.

How can a force act over long distances seemingly instantly? The fact that we don't dismiss gravity immediately as spiritualism is only a testament to the multi-generational coping mechanism has made this new force mundane.

Now Newton's concept of gravity is thought of as being "real" and "physical" and within the realm of "science" despite the fact that it upended the physicalist assumptions of the day of how matter and atoms can interact.

All of this is to say that old-school atomists (Democritus, Lucretius, etc.) promoted a highly obsolete science that not even modern "materialists" endorse. At that, new occult and spiritual forces, like gravity, after repeated observations and theories come under purview of "science" and thus become "physical" even though they are clearly of a totally different substance than traditional atoms and matter.

That said, the universe has many different substances and forces that are not necessarily commensurable. They may interact, but that

in no ways makes them the same substance. When we realize that, we have already dismissed philosophical monism. Some forces are familiar enough to make models of, thus they become unsurprising, regular and subject to science. Other forces of the universe might be wider than experimental tests can harness, so irregular as to avoid sensible-sounding theories and different enough to still seem miraculous forever.

So in saying that consciousness is a totally different substance, of a non-material reality and cannot be accounted for from narrowly material computation is not an unreasonable statement. I would say that it is a self-evidently true statement regardless of philosophical assumptions, and I think it would behoove people who purport to study consciousness to acknowledge it as such, rather than attempting to muddy the waters and reduce conscious theater to something it is not, so they can pretend to study it.

10 Learn Latin

Latin was the first language I learned and has probably been the most useful. Here I'll talk about some of the things it's gotten me and some recommendations for how to learn it well.

10.1 What I've gotten out of learning Latin

10.1.1 You get multiple languages for one.

Latin, as you probably know is the ancestor of Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, etc. Once you know Latin, it is quite literally downhill learning any of these. In college, I decided to take Spanish for a degree specialization (I was doing an international business thing and required a foreign language). Merely based on my knowledge of Latin, I just tested into fifth-level Spanish and figured it out from there. I don't even remember learning Spanish, but I can speak it and still do every once in a while.

In grad school I took classes taught in Spanish and French. I can basically read all Romance languages. I even read Rhaeto-Romance poetry for fun (the languages of Switzerland). All of this is nearly free stuff when you learn Latin.

10.1.2 Latin will unironically red-pill you on many subjects.

Looking to other cultures in the world might change your view of things in some superficial way, but looking into the past will revolutionize how you see it. A recurring point I make in many contexts is that **the past is literally an alien civilization.** Most of what people pretend they know about it is repeatedly cited modern rumors about it. Seeing it in its own words is very different.

It's insane the amount of writing done in Latin in the medieval period and antiquity, so much of which isn't even on the mind of translators. A lot of historians just cite modern historians. Theologians cite modern theologians. Scientists cite modern scientists. Once you crack open a traditional book on any of these subjects you realize the provinciality and oblviousness of modern "frameworks."

In generative linguistics, people who have never read anything written before 1950 pat themselves on the back for all the "problems" they've solved not knowing they are only retreading paths long es-

tablished by Stoics, Modistae and early Indo-Europeanists. There are a lot of theologians and philosophers who are trapped in modern citation circles because they don't have the power of Latin that can bring them in touch directly with Aquinas or Augustine or other philosophers of the early periods.

Knowing Latin is like an academic superpower and supposed intellectuals will fear you. Latin used to be the bare minimum of a respectable intellectual... actually... you know what, it still is. Now is your chance to have an actual one up over more pompous people whose only function is writing lit reviews with a disability to read original sources. Being privy to an original and long-neglected source will be a continuous content mill which will unironically be the envy of others in academia.

10.1.3 Knowing Latin is better academically than an undergraduate degree in linguistics.

The process of learning Latin and the lore around you will equip you with all the terminology and principles to make you superior to someone who just studies "linguistics" without any actual application. I really mean this. When I was a grad student in linguistics, all the brightest undergrads had one thing in common: Latin. I actually came to judge people based on how they first got interested in linguistics. The smartest ones always started with Latin, the biggest plebs always started because they liked some Steven Pinker book (sorry Pinkucks! Those are the honest facts!)

10.2 How to Learn Latin

10.2.1 What I used

When I learned Latin, all I had was a copy of this book: Collar & Daniell's Beginner's Latin Book. The truth is that most old Latin books are good (old being at least 70 to 100 years old). After language learning became commercialized, it all became dismissable. You can see a list of downloadable Latin textbooks and other materials here here.

The only other source I used in the past to learn and read Latin in a biglottic Latin/Greek New Testament (i.e. Greek on the left and Latin on the right). This is probably actually the single most significant book I own, now that I think about it. I learned Greek from it too and I've had it for around 15 years now.

10.2.2 Lingua Latina per se Illustrata

Although I didn't know about until later, there is another very unique and excellently made Latin series called Lingua Latina per se Illustrata "The Latin Language Illustrated by Itself" by Hans Orberg. You can see an English publisher here, but you can also find them on eBay

or pdfs on Library Genesis or Pirate Bay (along with audio for the books).

LLPSI is unique and really stands out. **The entire book, including explanations is in Latin.** Latin words and grammatical concepts are explained by illustration and example. This sounds absurd frankly: how are you supposed to learn a language from a book written in that language? But the design is so perfect that it works.

I recommend to get LLPSI and some classical grammar primer like Collar & Daniell's because I think especially for newbs, it might be necessary to have explicit instruction about grammar points in English.

10.3 Read this

Read this article: "Latin by the Dowling Method." It's back from the early internet and its recommendations have stood the test of time and I agree with them.

10.4 Latin links

You may've known about these already, but they're worth noting.

- The Latin Library – Massive collection of classical and medieval Latin works

- Textkit – Greek and Latin resources and forum

11 Learn Chinese

Chinese is the hardest language to learn according to normies who have never tried to learn it.

In reality, Chinese is really easy. It has literally no complex morphology: no tense, plurals, gender. It doesn't have irregular verbs or nouns because it has no verb and noun endings whatsoever. It's almost difficult to explain how easy Chinese is.

The only different thing is the writing system which is I hesitate to say anachronistic. The Chinese character system is more structurally similar to Sumerian cuneiform than to English morphophonemic writing. That presents a unique hurdle, but one if properly tackled is not too difficult and also edifying. It's important to realize in any case that learning a language and learning its writing system are two separate things.

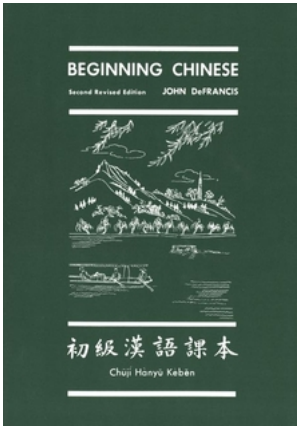
Knowing this is important for mastering or even beginning Chinese.

11.1 These are the best Chinese Books

The Yale series by John DeFrancis is not just the absolute best for learning Chinese, but they are an eternal exemplar of basically the best you can do for any language. The books all have generic names and they're linked below with audio. The books are massive. Even if you just get "Beginning Chinese" and "Beginning Chinese Reader, Part 1," you'll know around 4 semesters worth of Chinese compared to your average university course. They have free audio too. Remember that if you get nervous about their price tags, which might be as high as $50. These books are severely worth it though.

There are actually two parallel book series in the DeFrancis/Yale series: the green books, which cover the spoken language (in Romanization) and the red books (the readers) that cover characters. It might sound strange to cover the language itself and the characters separately, but it is massively superior.

11.1.1 The Green Books (for the language)



The great thing about the main series is that they come with many, many exercises and drills which are actually good for individual use.

Books that expect you to read something once and internalize it are irreparable.

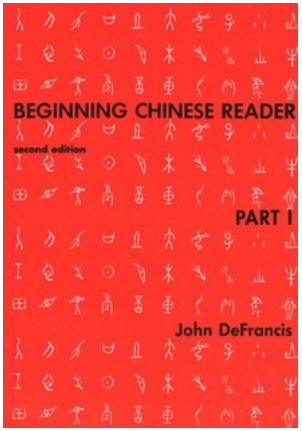
Links are to the official Yale site. Probably better to buy on eBay or something though. Worth the money even when they are expensive.

- Beginning Chinese (audio)
- Intermediate Chinese (audio)
- Advanced Chinese (audio)

You can get .pdfs of all these books on Library Genesis. I have physical copies, except some an ex-girlfriend borrowed and never gave back. If you read this, you better send them back!

Note that I've also linked audio that was recorded for these books, which is great. They used to cost a lot too, but now they're free!

11.1.2 The Red Books (for characters)



The reason the language in transliteration and the characters are in two books is because learning them is really two different processes. The green books are more typical language learning books. The red books/readers are different.

Every chapter, they teach you 10 characters, but with those 10 characters, you might learn to combine them into 50 new words based on them. The pacing here is for only learning the essential and most used characters as simply as possible as you advance. The readers do not explain grammar and expect you to be advancing in the green books to understand grammatical things.

- Beginning Chinese Reader, Part 1 (audio for parts 1 and 2)
- Beginning Chinese Reader, Part 2
- Intermediate Chinese Reader, Part 1 (audio for parts 1 and 2)
- Intermediate Chinese Reader, Part 2
- Advanced Chinese Reader (audio)

11.1.3 The Blue Books?

I won't link them because they sort of the defeat the point, and I don't have them, but there is also a blue series which is just the green series but with the language in characters. I think it's intended more for classes that can't do the DeFrancis method due to bureaucratic constraints. If it has the exercises of the green books, that's good and all, but really the value of the system is the fact that when you do the spoken language in the green books, you don't have to worry about unknown characters and when you do the characters in the red book, that's all you need to pay attention to.

I'm not dismissing the blue books, because the quality of the Yale/DeFrancis series is still light-years ahead of all other series, but I'd stick with the classics here.

11.2 Notes about Chinese

11.2.1 The tone cope

I remember having normalfriends in my Chinese class (which was a waste of time, just get the DeFrancis books) who would say that Chinese wasn't too hard "except for the tones." Mandarin Chinese has four tones that distinguish words. If you've sat through your first day in Chinese class or even seen a YouTube video on Chinese, you know this.

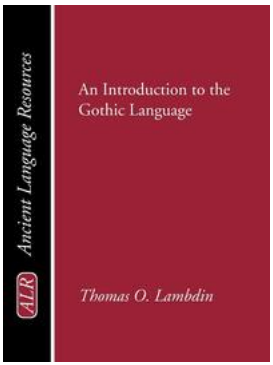
Normies see this alien concept of having tones and they turn their brains off. There were kids in my class who said they'd "just not learn" the tones. Which is sort of like saying you're going to learn English, but not the vowels "because they're too hard."

Actually around half of the world's languages have tones. They are not bizarre or highly "marked" in an objective sense. They are much more common that the "th" sound in English. You can bear it.

12 Advice on Some Other Languages

This page is just for minor pointers on lesser studied languages that I don't have enough to have on their own pages.

12.1 Gothic



Gothic is a dead language and the only thing existing in it is a partially translated New Testament by Wulfila. It still is a very important language for the study of Germanic and Indo-Europeanism because it is the only language of "Eastern Germanic" so well attested. Eastern Germanic languages are distinct from other Germanic languages in their lack of umlaut and some other characteristically Germanic features, while Gothic still retains some earlier Indo-European inflectional categories.

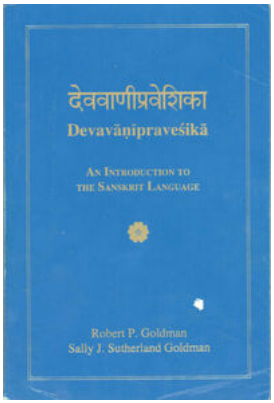
I mention Gothic only because one of the best ever language learning books I've ever seen is written for it, and that is Thomas Lambdin's Introduction to the Gothic Language. I actually took a Gothic class flippantly in graduate school, but the book stuck out to me as being perfectly designed for the typical target audience of Gothic in historical linguistics.

The book has very well designed lessons and activities, but I think greatest is that in the back of the book, for each chapter there is a corresponding lesson on the historical grammar of the content learned. It goes through what conjugates of each word exist in English, Latin, Greek or Sanskrit or other Indo-European languages and provided comparative paradigms of noun and verb inflections. No word or concept is left without a real mneumonic device, not a fake one fake

from some joke about the word, but one tied into the actual historical facts of the word.

I've said before that one of the reasons I never use things like Anki and "spaced repetition software" is that the real way to retain information is to understand how it fits within a wider web of information. In historical linguistics, you have an ideal of this because the more you learn, the easier it is to "remember:" remembering that the Gothic word for "field" is akrs is incredibly simple when you realize it's the same as Latin ager, Greek agrós, Sanskrit ájra and English acre.

12.2 Sanskrit



Sanskrit is the crown jewel of Indo-European languages and there are very few resources for it. Luckily, there is Devavanipravesika by Goldman and Sutherland, which again is a star in terms of language books.

I do recommend you have some of these abilities before attempting Sanskrit:

1. Some grammatical knowledge of a classical inflected Indo-European language like Latin or Greek.

2. Knowledge of the Devanagari script which is used for Sanskrit

nowadays (also the script of Hindi and many other modern Indian languages).

12.2.1 Sandhi

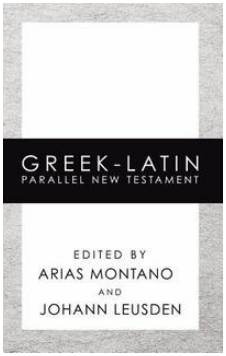
In English, if you say the sentence "What are you up to?" it usually comes out closer to "Whatchu up to?" This kind of phonological compression is a natural and systematic process in all languages. What is interesting is that when written language was younger, it was very common to express these phonological changes in the writing system itself. It looks slangish in modern English to write "whatchu," but it is more accurate after all.

Sanskrit overtly writes every alternation like this, including when words seem to combine together into a single prosodic word. The term for this is [Sandhi].dfn.

The tricky thing that newbies to Sanskrit must understand is that knowing the principles of Sandhi are the first priority in knowing Sanskrit because it's impossible to even parse a basic sentence before you understand it. Phonemically, many Sanskrit words end in an -s, but one of the first rules of Sandhi is that words are not allowed to end in -s in most cases. So -s might show up as -h or -o or something else depending on the phonetic context.

I say this because before you get excited about diving into Sanskrit, you have to make sure you know the basics of Sandhi or it will all be a mess.

12.3 Classical/Koiné Greek

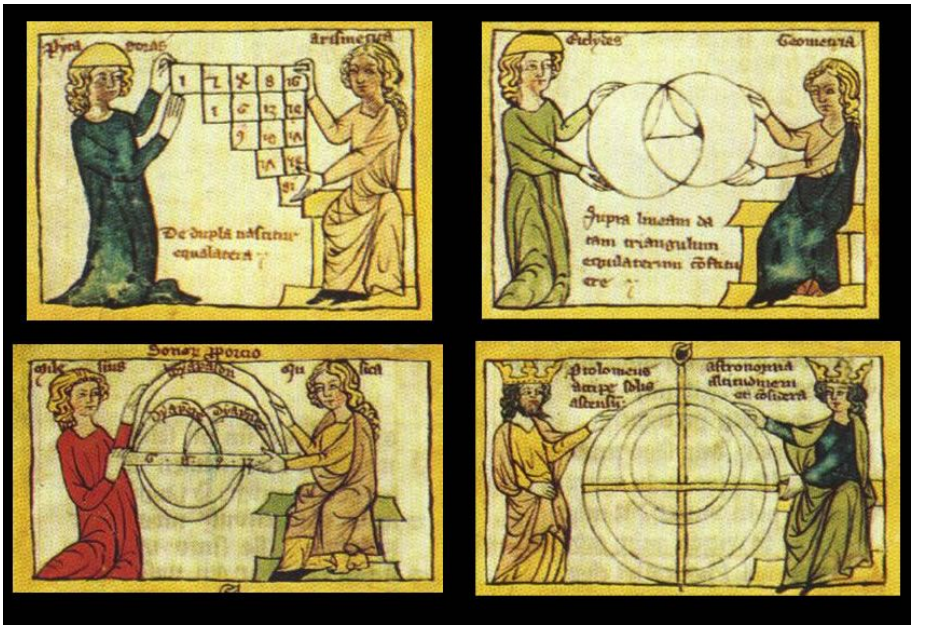


Greek, much like Spanish, I never really sat down to learn. Greek is close enough in form to Latin that I learned it from reading a biglottic Bible in both languages. Its grammar presents very few concepts alien to Latin, the only big hurdles probably being the novel uses of the article and if you want to learn classical Greek like a pro, the pitch accent system.

What I mean is that I only read very little of Greek grammar before I could pick up my Latin-Greek Bible and start reading the Greek with the aid of the parallel Latin. This was also a nice experience because you can see the similaries between the two languages, but also how the expressiveness of Greek is sometimes lost in translation.

Greek, for example, has such a complete and elegant paradigm of participles that many of them are unstranlatable in Latin. Latin has only passive perfect participles and active present participles, while Greek has participles for the whole spectrum of voice, tense and aspect. What that means is that Latin has to talk around some common Greek expressions, often utilizing Latin deponents (which can have perfect active participle) to get the meaning across.

13 Academic



13.1 Papers and Memories...

Here are some old academic papers that I mostly wrote as term papers and such in graduate school. People occasionally ask out of interest.

By the time I got a year or so into my Ph.D. at Arizona, I had pretty much not intention on continuing in the charade of academia, therefore, they are usually out of the mold of normalcy for the field since most of these papers I had no intention of ever "publishing" in "academic journals."

Master's Thesis on External Possession (April 2015) Not actually that interesting, at least I don't think.

Syntax doesn't exist (May 2016) I wrote this back for that old throwaway seminar class that Tom, Massimo and Chomsky put on

(this was actually before Chomsky officially relocated to Arizona). Most of the students in the class were just undergraduate communists who didn't know anything about linguistics and just wanted to be around Chomsky and therfore had to survive abject confusion and suffering. The class was really fun and I just talked to cute girls or us graduate students just goofed off. This was actually when I decided to get my first ThinkPad.

...Oh yeah the paper. It actually was the first inklings of "my idea" written in this highly disorganized paper in less than a day. The idea is that alternations in languages that seem strange all occur because they are attempts to try to optimize between phonological and semantic constraints. Syntax is not an autonomous engine with idiosyncratic constraints, but just a shorthand we use to talk about these strange things that happen to make phonological structure acceptable to semantic structure or vice versa. I argue that extraposition, the EPP and some other things all are phonological repairs and we don't have to posit some extra constraints in the language faculty to model them ad hoc.

Scope marking... yep, it's prosodic too. (May 2017) A very short paper I wrote for one of Mike Hammond's classes. Not even sure it gets the point across, but I really like this idea. Languages like German can have residual wh- words in places through which they have been raised: scope markers. I noticed a formal similarity with noun phase stressing in a cited Kimper article. I argue that German scope marking is actually the same pheonomenon, based on that interesting idea that Richards had about phonology driving wh- movement.

Prosodically-driven word order (September 2017) I argue that syntactic word order is just an epiphenomenon of prosodic, rather than "syntactic" parameters. Ultimately, all languages simply place subjects, objects and verbs where they will recieve the appropriate stress level, and where this is ties in with independent prosodic rules of each language. I use Optimality Theory to model this as some cruel joke

and because this was a qualifying paper and I had to do something conventional. I don't really take it seriously as a scientific tool.

Indo-European Particles and Word Order (November 2017) The most boring class I ever, ever took in my 20 years of schooling from kindergarten to Ph.D. was Heidi Harley's head-movement seminar. Just thinking about that room lowers my testosterone. Actually, I need to go lift right now...

Thankfully, the only thing we had to do for that seminar was write a paper. (We may've had to present articles a couple days, but I must have suppressed that level of boredom.) Obviously I was not going to write something about head-movement (which is some silly theory-internal idea of Generative Grammar), so I wrote the paper on Indo-European particles and how they affected a change in word order over time from SOV to SVO. This was obviously not the kind of paper expected and I wrote it dismissively, but the argument of it is solid and interesting.

A Critique of "Reason" (December 2017) Finally, not a stupid linguistics paper. On my issues with the Kahneman and Tversy's "heuristics and biases" program, with various support from Gigerenzer and Taleb. I wrote this for a class of Massimo Piatelli-Palmarini's I took which if I remember right was technically an economics/neuroscience class. Massimo is a big fan of Kahneman and Tversky, but I've always found their work basic and predicated on clumsy hyper-rationalism which ends up not being rational at all. I explain in the paper: Actually read it.

Game Theory determines quanitifer scope interpretation (April 2018) I argue that Chomskyan syntax is not equipped to properly deal with quantifier scope interpretations. I present a framework that assumes that speakers use and assume their languages' constructions to communicate scope given certain universal constraints assuming the priority of surface scope and economy principles. Nearly all normal and abnormal scope judgments fall out for free from this method,

which is analyzed with Game Theory. At the end: flexible syntax (across either a whole language or a specific construction) ends up entailing universal surface scope, while syntactic rigidity causes scope ambiguity. BTW, look at those cute little LaTeX charts...

The Shivasutras and Neural Nets (April 2018) This is actually probably a ditsy paper, but it was my last paper I wrote in graduate school and for a class I never actually went to. I don't really remember what it was even a class on. I think Mike Hammond was the professor? Maybe Robert Henderson? That's how much I paid attention my last semester, and I wrote this paper as a larp.

I had been reading classical Indian/Vedic grammars and the Paninian stuff. We had been talking about the "interpretability" (or lack-thereof) of Neural Nets so I wrote a little piece on the Shivasutras, which order the phonemes of Sanskrit in a unique order to be able to refer to them in Paninian grammars with the greatest economy. I make the statement that these classes of phonemes are analogous to the intermediate nodes of a neural net, which often appear to have no real-life relevance, but one often appears at an extra level of abstraction. For example, it becomes very easy to model the Indo-European ablaut system via the Shivasutras since different lines show the different grades. Sanskrit grammarians of course had no direct knowledge of Proto-Indo-European but in the interest of formal economy, end up discovering aspects of its grammar.

13.2 The Indo-European Tapes

Since I had a background in classical languages and Indo-European studies, a couple of my friends wanted to put together a little reading group to learn about Indo-European stuff. We covered all the basics of Indo-European grammar and reconstruction and basic lore, although we fizzled out after only a couple weeks.

For my personal records, I actually recorded these meetings on my phone (it was actually mostly me lecturing and all of us making jokes).

The audio recordings are extremely messy, with every bump on the table audible, but they are listenable if you care about the topic.

I also made some handouts which have also survived. I'm uploading these in ogg because it's a superior format. If you're an Apple/Mac user, suck it up and get a real audio player.

1. Week 1 Audio: Basics and Phonology (handout)
2. Week 2 Audio: Ablaut, Morphology and Indo-Hittite (handout)
3. Week 3 Audio: Divergence and Syntax (handout, examples)
4. Week 4 Audio: Paleohistory and Migration (handout)
5. Week 5 Audio: Greek, individual languages (handout on Greek)
6. We got lazy after this and the group ended! Good while it lasted. I had prepared this handout for the sixth week which never happened.

Week 1 Audio: Basics and Phonology (handout) **If someone is good at cleaning up audio, I would be very grateful if you could do a number on these; email me and I can provide the lossless originals for that.**

(Note also that these tapes were recorded back when I cursed, so you can get a snippet of me still saying naughty words.)

13.3 Video Talks

The embedded videos here are from PeerTube. These are all on YouTube if you prefer (to see all the extra comments or whatever).

13.3.1 Biolinguistic Clarity in Generative Syntax (2015)

Click to reveal video. Shortly after I finished by M.A. at the University of Georgia, I ended up returning to help with a conference they had

started recently. Some guy canceled at the last minute the day before, so I volunteered to invent a talk in 24 hours. It was more of a comedy routine, but here it is. I consider the actual ideas behind this talk underdeveloped and totally superseded by the ideas I illustrate above in those paper on syntax and phonology, but this is a good idea of the kinds of things I was thinking around 2015.

13.3.2 Language as Synesthesia (2017)

Click to reveal video. slides

Tom Bever had a cognitive science seminar for graduate students and this was my presentation for it. Most of the other grad students were in cogsci or philosophy, nonetheless, I did a pretty linguistics-heavy talk.

13.3.3 "Linguistics Isn't 60 Years Old!" (2018)

Click to reveal video. slides

My last semester at Arizona, Simin invited me to present a day in one of her grad classes on the history of linguistic thought (she actually invited me to present a lot because she knew I liked teaching or just talking about these issues, while she is totally burned out on it (I actually was her assigned assistant for an undergraduate syntax class, and I ended up teaching about a third of the days just because I wanted to and she liked taking vacation)). Anyway, as we all know, I mostly like old books and old stuff that no one seems to know anymore, so I talk about Paninian/Sanskrit grammar in Classical India.

As we talk about at the end, originally we planned to make this a series (I even thought of making it a goodbye tour), but that never happened. No one will ever know my hot takes on medieval European grammar.

13.4 Audio Talks

"Chomsky Joins Us in Hell" (YouTube video) – Me and my roomate talk about when Chomsky relocated to our department from MIT. This was originally going to be a series until Heidi Harley bullicided Ryan from talking more lol. Quantifier Scope is Just All Fun and Games – I gave a teaser presentation for prospective students on my quantifier scope project mentioned above. It's also on PeerTube and YouTube, but no video. Neuroscience and decision-making graduate seminar presentation – Begins around 1:20. Sort of bad quality audio at the beginning.

13.5 Other presentations

I have some slides and stuff from other presentations, and I might upload them here when I get the chance.

UGA colloquium – a very old talk from my Master's program. Was more of a comedy routine, but you can look at it and only guess what my hilarious jokes were. For the Quantifier Scope with Game Theory project I have a couple presentation slides: Synsalon presentation and another one. The Greek Alphabet – presentation I did in my friend Shannon's class once. Handouts I made the syntax class I did with Simin Karimi: Head Movement (sort of modeled off a lecture Andrew Carnie would give) and on page A Guide to Generative Syntax. Also a presentation on constituency I did in that class.

13.6 Don't go to college!

Just in case anyone sees this page and thinks, "Oh wow, look at all the cool things Luke was doing in graduate school! I should go too!" Do not do that. I want to make it clear that if any genuinely intelligent and curious person whose goal is inquiry without reservation, you will find nothing but frustration and suffering in contemporary academia.

Particularly Arizona was very cultlike, stifling and uncomfortable. I stayed alive by being blasé and jocular about things, as you may be able to tell in some of those recordings, but I want to make it clear that I regret going into a Ph.D. program and I consider it the third biggest mistake of my life. I will never get those years back, and I sorrowfully regret it.

14 We Want Our 4 Causes Back! - Feb 13, 2021

Aristotle, in his *Physics* argued that there are four causes behind everything that exists. These causes answer the question of "How" or "Why" something is the way it is.

The Material Cause - The material from which something is made. E.g. the stone of a statue.

The Efficient Cause - The external force that causes something to be made. E.g. the artisan and his tools who make a statue.

The Formal Cause - The form or plan of the thing made that define it. E.g. the artisan's written or thought blueprints or sketch of plans for how to make the statue.

The Final Cause - The goal and reason of the thing. E.g. the purpose for which the artisan is making the statue.

If the statue lacks any one of the four causes, it will not be made.

15 The Demise of the Formal and Final Causes

If you want to point your finger at a single philosophical change that defines the shift from the Aristotelean worldview of antiquity and the Middle Ages to the materialism of modernity, it is the rejection of the Formal and Final Causes in the early Enlightenment.

Just ask your modern brain: "Does everything really have a purpose?" You will probably reflexively think back "No," therefore, you

do not believe in a Final Cause to everything. The same is true of the Formal Cause, both of them seeming to assume that there is a kind of conscious agency behind the action. That isn't strictly speaking how Aristotle intended them, but that's how they are interpreted through modern goggles.

You can see their rejection as early as the 1600's: Francis Bacon in Novum Organum pushed aside the Final Cause as only being only suitable for inter-human behavior. The Formal Cause, he dismissed merely as desperata "hopeless." He actually dismissed the vocabulary of the other two causes as being superficial and an irrelevant distinction too, but philosophically, they are still retained in his philosophy by other terms.

In any case, modern people do not believe in Final and Formal Causes, or if they do, not for everything in the cosmos. For Aquinas and others in the Aristotelean world, the question of whether the universe has a purpose or a formal plan is a kind of tautology. Of course it does! Everything non-random does in Aristotelianism.

15.1 The Final Cause in Nature?

Now our post-materialist view of the Final Cause is sort of different from Aristotle's original view. We have to remember that Aristotle viewed grammar and cognition as something that in some way was directly reflective of reality itself. Compare this view shared with the so-called "Speculative Grammarians" of the Middle Ages, "speculative" coming from the Latin word speculum "mirror", since grammar reflects reality. This common strand stretches from Aristotle to those influenced by his work like Priscian and Bacon (Roger (who was based), not Francis (who was p. cringe)).

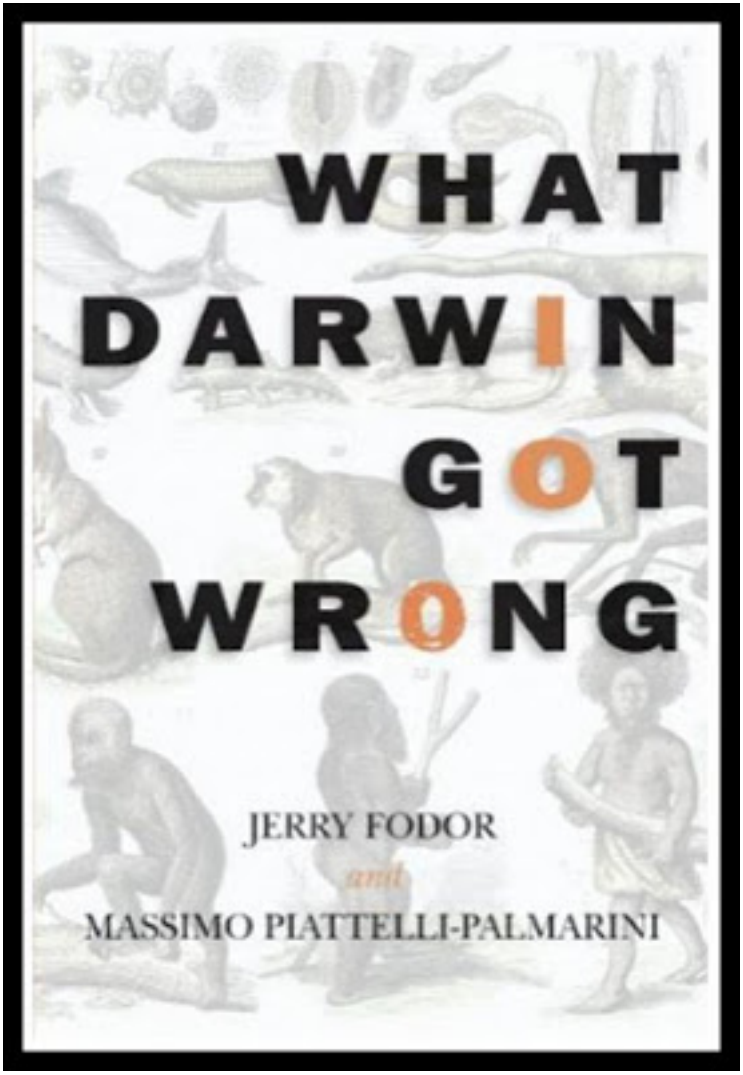
Nowadays we atomize questions like "Why" to the point that even causality itself doesn't mean anything and is a mere human cognitive convention, but for Aristotle, the linguistic existence of "Why" questions means that there is a legitimate logical equivalent to "Why" in

reality.

Aristotle originally had argued that it is appropriate to refer to the Final Cause of something whenever it is not due to randomness or spontaneity. The example he uses is the growth of human teeth: there is no variance in where the molar and incisors grow within the human mouth. Everything appears where it's "supposed to" and we can assume that there is some kind of Final Cause behind this.

If different shapes and sizes teeth grew in different locations of the mouth, then it would be appropriate to talk of them as lacking a Final Cause. Things that appear randomly and inconsistently do not necessarily have Final Causes, but if something happens invariably, we can trust that it has a Final Cause.

15.2 Darwin "Got It Wrong" too?



So how far are moderns willing to take the rejection of the Formal and Final Causes?

One of my old Ph.D. advisors, Massimo Piatelli-Palmarini wrote a book with Jerry Fodor called What Darwin Got Wrong. You can withhold your kneejerk reactions; it's not a creationist book or anything, but it almost ended up being as controversial—it's a critique of Darwinian natural selection on "philosophic" grounds.

I will stultify one of the main arguments for brevity's sake: "How can we reasonably talk about evolution as a goal oriented process when we have admitted already that speaking of Final Causes is illegitimate?" Massimo and Fodor do not use the Aristotelian terms, (instead they talk of Gould's spandrels) but that's what they mean.

15.2.1 Evolution would only have been "scientific" in Medieval Europe.

Darwinian natural selection is actually a kind of cheat idea for materialism. In order to understand how humans have arisen from common descent with other animals, we want to have a narrative of why we speak, why we are bipedal, why our bodies are mostly hairless, etc. etc. Natural selection offers an answer without reference to a conscious incremental designer (God), but it smuggles back in the Final Cause: "This evolved to do that."

But if we actually limit ourselves from talking in purpose-driven/Final-Cause statements, the most communicative "scientific" thing we can say is "Humans share a common ancestor with other animals, but we became different." The issue of "Why" is dreaded "metaphysics." In truth, **we actually need a Final Cause to understand anything**. The Final Cause, as Aristotle notes, is really the most important cause, because understanding it is key to understanding something in its greater context. **Understanding something intuitively largely amounts to knowing its Final Cause**. Darwinism came to be accepted as a theory because it cleverly smuggled in illegal metaphysics that we were having withdrawal symptoms for. When you really think about it, this totally withdraws Darwinian selection from

the ledger of supposedly scientific topics if you took such standards seriously (I don't).

The funny thing is that people can easily be made to become hyper-material anti-metaphysicians or lax on everything depending on circumstances. Fodor and Massimo partially wrote their book as a critic of "adaptationism" and evolutionary psychology, which were and still are bugaboos to the political left because they seek to explain minutiae of human social life, including hot-button issues like gender differences and race, in the light of Darwinian natural selection. Leftists like Gould and Lewontin would dismiss such explanations as "just-so stories," as would science-popularizers and the press, but Fodor and Massimo argue that this is an argument you cannot avoid generalizing once you make it. It applies to all of evolution: if it is philosophically illegitimate to talk about human sexual dimorphism because that reads a Final Causes into evolution, then it is equally illegitimate to talk about any other kind of change as being purpose driven by "selection."

This book was received with mostly hostile confusion by the mainstream press and I suspect most biologists which mostly missed the argument and were languishing in the culture wars of the Bush Years. Mind you, I don't agree with the book, but it's mostly because I don't care to endorse this kind of materialism, but most people do indeed at least claim to abide by it, so these arguments would be important to address for them.

15.2.2 Just a "linguistic" argument?

At the end of it, any evolutionary biologist will be tempted to throw up their hands and say "So what?!" to that philosophical objection. After all, it sure feels like some kind of technicality or argument from the way we linguistically talk about evolution. **And they're right!** In truth, Darwinian evolution is a useful theory specifically because it is a method of giving us a Final Cause for gradual evolutionary

changes. That's the whole point afterall. If it didn't give us a Final Cause, it wouldn't be an explanation. Striking the Formal Cause from scientific vocabulary is only a recipe for the typical postivistic science status quo of denying any "metaphysics" to your science while just tacitly assuming it all.

15.3 Return of the Formal Cause?

What about the Formal Cause? That is, what about the idea that everything must have a form/plan behind its creation? If we are willing to concede that a Final Cause can arise from natural selection,

what about a Formal Cause?

While I'm on Fodor and Massimo's book (who again, are not talking in Aristotelian terms themselves), they actually do end up resuscitating the Formal Cause as well, albeit in a more purposeful way. While the book beats around the bush, I can say that in my conversations with Massimo at Arizona, he really does think of evolution as not being an issue of natural selection. Instead he (and Noam Chomsky as well) has the view that complex features in biology evolve from inbuilt genetic parameters whose complex interactions can also produce fully-formed design. This is the kernel of Minimalism in linguistics.

Now in presentations, Massimo always loves to talk about those species of jellyfish which with a single simple genetic change, develop highly complicated proto-eyes even without a direct need. One minor genetic development can produce structure as complicated as a primitive eye. This is not uncommon in biology because many complex structures are simple derivatives of simple principles. The general name for this is emergent properties and are said to be based on so-called Laws of Form.

Laws of Form are actually a big topic of conversation in linguistics nowadays, Chomsky's idea approaching the idea that one single and very simple cognitive change could be enough to produce the human language faculty. (This is totally contrary to the pop-idea of language abilities slowly arising from behavioristic cave-man grunting complexifying over centuries).

It should be obvious that Laws of Form, Fibonacci spirals, golden ratios, apparent ordering and other emergent properties arise naturally from the universe without the obvious need of conscious planning. This is not a rejection of the Formal Cause, but states the truth that it is universal. "Form" needn't just be a conscious plan like the sculptor's plan for a hunk of marble, but a form that emerges from natural principles.

15.4 Even a Materialistic Universe Generates Formal and Final Causes

In trying to escape the Formal and Final Causes, modern science has really made them more irreplaceable. Laws of Form emerge from very simple computational operations and define the formal structure of things that arise in nature. At the same time, any kind of selective pressure or survival mechanism like Darwinian selection will naturally produce structure arranged to a goal. Understanding anything is quite impossible without referring to its Formal and Final Causes.

For the Aristotelian up until Newton (the last of the magicians in J.M. Keynes' terms), this is us uncovering the Mind of God. While words like "God" make moderns queasy, it's legitimate to ask why the Formal and Final Causes as concepts should. Final Causes are by definition universal where unchecked spontaneity occurs. A conscious human mind is not a prerequisite for them, neither for Formal Causes.

You actually can keep even a very clumsy materialism while accepting these traditional notions. Indeed, to understand something's Final and Formal Causes is to truly understand it such that the Material and Efficient Causes seem like mere details.

16 A Critique of "Reason" - December 11, 2017

"The aberration of philosophy is that, instead of seeing logic and the categories of reason as means toward the adjustment of the world for utilitarian ends (basically involving an expedient falsification), one believed one possessed in them the criterion of truth and reality. [. . .] Instead of employing them as a tool to make the world manageable and calculable, the madness of philosophers imagined that in these categories it presented the concept of another 'true' world, to which the one in which man lives does not correspond. [. . .] This is the greatest error that has ever been committed. One believed one possessed a criterion of reality in the form of reason, while in fact, one possessed them in order to become master of reality. In order to misunderstand reality in a shrewd manner. And behold: now this world came to seem false, and precisely on account of the properties that constitute its reality: change, becoming, multiplicity, opposition, contradiction, war. And then, the entire fatal error was there."

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 1888

16.1 How Not to Do Optometry

Imagine if there was a school of thought in the ocular sciences that insisted that humans are endowed with an "irrational" visual system. They could find evidence of their view everywhere.

Most of their fruitful empirical work would consist in putting humans in unfamiliar or unnatural viewing situations, perhaps with optical illusions or color distinguished by an imperceptible degree. They would run their experiments expectantly, and to no one's surprise, would find that humans are terribly bad at performing these rarified tasks.

They would talk about the theory behind it all: objects are actually just agglomorations of atoms, which the human visual system fails to see; qualia like color are utter illusions; in reality they are only light of different wavelengths that our eyes erroneously perceive as these invented colors, which exist nowhere outside of the mind. In short, the human visual system is mostly a lie, and can easily be spoofed and tricked.

Visual science popularizers would write books about how you can overcome your irrational eyes. People would see new technology, like computer screens, and talk about how poorly suited the human eyes are at adjusting to prolonged use of these evolutionarily unprecedented circumstances.

No doubt there might be a good bit of popular snobbery, where those educated in this kind of science would look down on rubes who insisted on relying on their own irrational eyes rather than the formal deductions of Rational Eye Theory. When a person was told that they perceived something "irrational", they would view it as a problem to be fixed.

This fantasy may sound somewhat absurd, but it's not to dissimilar too the world we live in. Visual scientists don't subscribe to an ideology so queer, but many economists, cognitive scientists, decision theorists and others hold, more or less the same idea about human cognition, implicitly or explicitly.

For the last 60 or 70 years, there has been a fixation in these fields with human "irrationality" generally. Part of this is a necessary theoretical defense mechanism: after several centuries of economic modelling, it was realized that humans don't necessarily follow the assumptions of whatever economic theory. The error of economists had to be an error of the assumptions, and the most frequently blamed was that amorphous assumption of "rationality".

We are told not just that the human mind is equipped with some heuristics, but that these heuristics, seeing that they fail to match a Platonic standard of "logic" are in fact "irrational". If heuristics lead us to correct conclusions in complex domains, even systematically so, that is a kind of accident, like a broken clock being right twice a day. It's quite common, like the optometrist who ascribes to Rational Eye Theory, to create rarified experimental environments where decision heuristics are taken ad absurdum, put participants in them, then react in surprise that these novel situations elicit "irrational" responses.

16.1.1 What's Wrong with Rational Eye Theory?

The supporters of Rational Eye Theory, like their counterparts in our world, don't do faulty research. They don't necessarily publish false things, in fact the research is interesting and important for understanding the visual system.

Rational Eye Theory errs on two points. First, it attributes a normative value to the visual system. Even when proponents insist that Rational Eye Theory is merely positive, devoid of moral judgments, they still use very normative words to lambast what fails to meet its standard ("irrational", "biased" etc.) It creates an artificial Platonic

ideal of what "rational" vision is, an ideal totally disconnected from the actual use of the eye. Calling this ideal "rational" or "good", it assumes that any tendency of the eye to not follow this invented standard is therefore "bad" or "irrational".

Second, it misses the whole reason vision exists. Vision does not exist to solve sterile, contextless visual puzzles or survive optical illusions in experimental circumstances. It is a tool for making the relevant distinctions in real life, and doing so quickly and efficiently using as few priors and as little statistical noise as possible.

This is the metric to which vision should be assessed. While we might want to totally keep normative judgments away from science, if we were to call anything "good" or "rational", it should be this. Indeed it is easy to argue, as I will in section 6 that the difference between the employment of so-called heuristics and biases and the use of what we traditionally think of as deductive reason is a fundamental difference of quantity, not of adherence to truth or effectiveness.

And naturally, the same is true of those who like to imagine that humans are flawed for their "irrationalities" in decision-making. We should not constantly evaluate normatively human decision-making by its adherence to an artificial standard of coherence in highly limited circumstances. Humans may be Dutch Book-able and manipulable in experimental circumstances, or in situations outside of their familiarity, but as I'll argue in section 7, in the most important domain of practical behavior, in uncertainty, so-called "irrationality" in the form of precaution and avoidance of the unfamiliar is precisely what keeps them from disaster.

Instead, if we do judge human reliance on heuristics and biases, we should only do so in the environment where it developed and where it is actually suited to operate in: i.e. *real life*.

Like vision, human reason and heuristics and biases are not supposed to reflect a Platonic ideal of the world, nor are the generalizations we can make about the different cognitive modules operating in

life comparable or equivalent (meaning, they can seem incoherent and contradictory and still highly effective). Human reason and heuristics exist to produce results, and like vision, bodymotion, tactile sensation and all other human senses, each of these function in the domain they have developed in.

The sociological edge of this is that much of this has led to a public condemnation of intuitive or heuristic thinking. In most times and places, reliance on heuristics (inborn or otherwise) is vastly superior to a deliberative ("rational") consideration of problems.

16.2 Organization

I've organized this argument into numbered sections, but each is a holon in itself. I am not presenting so much of a single thesis about reason, but a gestalt, and am doing so precisely because I reckon this misunderstanding of the human mind has many tendrils in need of addressing in distinct ways.

16.3 The algorithm of deconstruction

This tendency in the cognitive and decision sciences exists because it falls out of an easy and all-to-common algorithm of philosophical deconstruction which had become quite popular in the 20th century. It's not new; one can refer to Nietzche (1888)'s interdict against philosophers reproduced at the introduction to this document, which decries the same intellectual tendency. One can also see the condemnations of this "Platonism", so-called, as a moral and political philosophy in Popper (1945) which amount to the same criticism.

This algorithm is simple. (1) Invent an abstract "rational" metric and a narrow logical standard, ignoring what aspects of life deemed unimportant or insignificant a priori. As Nietzsche notes, this standard can indeed come from some genuinely practical use of reason.

(2) Make deductions in this logical system. (3) Bring these deductions back into the real world. (4) If the deductions fail to correspond to real-life behavior, conclude that real-life behavior is "irrational". (5) If the deductions not only fail to correspond to real-life behavior, but they also produce bad alternatives, note that it's only a model useful only in abstract situations. It's no different than an proverbial economist who, when chided for his blatant failures to predict or model events, retorts saying "it's not my fault people aren't rational".

This algorithm, while obviously never explicit, is still ubiquitous in the decision sciences, and is the typical methodology in the line of thought typically terms the "Heuristics-and-Biases" program. Gigerenzer (1996), in a reply to Kahneman and Tversky (1996), voices the same critique of this program, saying...

"Most practical statisticians start by investigating the content of a problem, work out a set of assumptions, and, finally, build a statistical model based on these assumptions. The heuristics-andbiases program starts at the opposite end. A convenient statistical principle, such as the conjunction rule or Bayes's rule, is chosen as normative, and some real-world content is filled in afterward, on the assumption that only structure matters.

That is, before thorough investigation of cognition, we are typical to first decide how cognition should be ordered. To bring to bear a distinction common in linguistics, there's a subtle parallel between this and the contrast between linguistic description and linguistic prescription. The heuristics-and-biases approach is adopting a tacit form of cognitive prescription, not only when they form overtly normative models of decision-making, but also when they craft narrow "descriptions" with somewhat loaded terminology, "logical", "rational" even "optimization".

Although endorsing the heuristics-and-biases program, M. Piattelli-Palmarini (1996, p. 194) makes the same point, and I think, correctly implies that the difference between positive and normative theory in

these situations is merely "terminological":

"Whether this is so because of normative conceptions of rationality, or simply with subject being 'right' or 'wrong,' is up to a point [of] terminological dispute. What counts is that everyone's life would be better if we learned to correct many of these spontaneous probabilistic intuitions of ours, and there are 'reasons' that we would be better off."

Thus, while some economists or decision theorists might hide behind purported claims to notional positivity, there is something fundamentally recommendational about the heuristics-and-biases program. Indeed, it focuses so strongly on behavior which is apparently paradoxical and perplexing without too much effort into the origins, synchronically or "diachronically" (i.e. evolutionarily) in the origin of these perplexities.

16.4 Not so irrational after all

This oversight means that the heuristics-and-biases program is apt to find a plethora of false positives in human "irrationality". That is, if our prerogative is to find irrationality, and we don't expect irrational behavior to be motivated, it's very sensible that we will misunderstand behaviors for which we've overlooked the context.

Indeed, we should expect that the field will produce many of these false positives over time. Gigerenzer (2008, pp. 14–15) does well to list some of these reversals, and it is worth repeating them in part.

Some biases are not so much biases at all, but results of improper context in experimental circumstances. The results of Sedlmeier et al. (1998) are likely an example of this: the so-called Availability Bias, while present in an original results of Tversky and Kahneman (1973), disappear when the letters are sampled rather than merely selected.

Something similar could be said, as noted by Lopes (1992), that some superficial "overconfidence" biases are the result of sensible assessments of tail risks. That is, a large majority of drivers say they

drive "better than the average", and while this may seem like a contradiction, it's true when we realize that traffic accidents are rare and highly skewed: a small minority drastically produce far more than their share of accidentally, meaning the majority is better than they would be in a statistically equal distribution.

As Hertig et al. (2005) note, the "irrational" overestimation of rare chances and the underestimation of more likely ones is not so much an error as a habit of hedging against error : one assumes that their information is incomplete, and as such all probabilities should regress to the mean.

The same is true of the so-called Hard-Easy Effect, where humans tend to overestimate performance on difficult tasks while underestimating performance on the mundane: the effect is as well a self-critical expectation of regression to the mean. Indeed in Juslin et al. (2000)'s revision of this "bias", they compare the those who insist on general human irrationality to the belief that, because the horizon is flat, therefore the world must be also: a "naive empiricism".

Research such as that in Hsu et al. (2005) is fundamental as it paints a more complete picture of how "non-rational" parts of the brain come into play. The amygdala and other "emotional" centers of the brain are recruited into decisionmaking precisely when those typical centers characteristic of logical optimization fall short of making a holistic and contexted decision. And, when brain damage makes the amygdala uninvocable, decision making gets worse. People fail to hedge against uncertainty.

16.5 Where do biases end and optimization begin?

Indeed on closer evaluation, not only should it be clear that heuristics and biases are fundamentally consistent, but that the boundary between them and deliberative logic is an issue of scale. Indeed, in a manner of thinking, all human cognitive abilities are the results of heuristics and biases, including optimization.

First, take a popular psychological mind hack. Say we ask experiment participants (or random people on the street) to give their estimates for math problems. A common so-called "glitch" in human computation is shown by giving people the following who problems:

(1) $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8$

(2) $8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$

Examining these two together, it should be clear that they are the same problem, and thus any rational estimate of either should be the same. The answer to both of these math problems is 40,320.

However, people give tremendously different estimates to each if shown alone. The first often receives an estimate in the hundreds, the second in the thousands.

But a good question then is What is the unbiased, rational estimate? To re-evoke the comparison of heuristics to the ocular system, a decent question worth asking is "what would a totally 'rational', 'optimized' and clear ocular system look like?" Would it see atoms themselves? Would it see qualia such as color and solidity that we know are illusions?

There are not so much good answers to these questions because there are not even coherent answers to them. In the same way that there is no "unbiased" way to use the visual system, there is no "unbiased" way to estimate these multiplicative products.

One of the perniciously flawed metaphors when talking about biases is the idea that there is some otherwise sterile deliberative process generating wellreasoned estimates generally, which is only then obfuscated by a "bias" that puts its finger on the scale, changing the output.

What is actually happening is that cognitive heuristics are applying algorithmically to address problems, and when we notice the tendencies of the heuristics to mis-guess, we call that difference a "bias". Hence, one might colloquially call our response to such math estimates as "biased", but there is no other way to estimate these

products. There is an algorithm we learn in school to achieve the correct answer, but this has no cognitive reality and is a learned way of manipulating numbers that happens to yield the right 40,320.

Instead, what probably happens in each case is that we investigate the math problem and begin estimating the product moving left to right. As our memory is taxed, our estimation becomes more fuzzy until we simply give up and give a very general guess, paying little attention to the later numbers.

One can reject this description of this algorithm for its debilitation by cognitive constraints, therefore making it "irrational", but that the important point is that heuristics and biases are the only real way cognition proceeds in this case, and when we start to act "rationally" we are really just compounding different heuristics together.

16.6 They are all models

We should take a step back to be clear for a second. Nowhere am I suggesting that what is called reason is bad per se, rather I object to a na¨ıve supremacy attributed to it. In this vision, optimization is the proper measure of the world, not other mental tools, and if optimization fails to shine in a particular domain, that is no fault of its own.

But on closer analysis it should be clear that the borders between optimization and the use of heuristics is are fuzzy at best. In reality, all implementations of both heuristics and rational deliberation are models of the world spread about a gradient of complexity.

A heuristic is a simple model, often with only one variable input, which is sometimes binary at that. The logical form of a heuristic as a model can be as simple as A→B. Such a model is as economical as computationally possible and can lead quite easily to a solution.

Reason too is a model, albeit a more complex one. In the most semantically bleached form, it involves various propositions (sometimes

statistical in nature) and logical connectives which join the inputs in such a way to give the desired answer.

This more complex model necessitates generalizing, checking for contradiction among sub-propositions (effectively proving or disproving). That means it is a more mentally taxing process, and more likely to fall prey to short-term memory constraints or general error.

Thus, when we think about the difference between reliance on heuristic and reliance on reason, we are really thinking of a difference of quantity.

There is not necessarily less logic in a heuristic than there is in more advanced logical optimization. One might object saying that reason imputes causality or some deeper level of relation than a heuristic, but it should be clear that this is an illusion.

The proper way, I think, to look reason/optimization or what is called System 2 in Kahneman (2011) and similar works, is not so much as a discrete sense of deliberation per se, but as a general tool that recruits other narrow mental faculties, heuristics and microtools to the set purpose.

The conscious process of reasoning or deliberation or optimization is often one in which the reasoner trolls his mind for more variables and heuristics to load into the model. The simple heuristic solution may already be there, and he is cognizant of it, but he wants to "be sure" by adding all the variables he can think of to his implicit model. This mental process amounts to loading on more and more heuristics to test the theoretical efficacy of the first.

But the addition of more model variables comes with diminishing returns either sooner or later. Formal models often show poorer performance than heuristics precisely because they have much more statistical noise. Evoking irrelevant mental faculties to determine an answer come with a cost that may not be compensated by higher accuracy, in fact, past a certain level, it must overstay its use.

At the worst the optimization process fails to converge on a solution

in what has been called "paralysis by analysis" or "the paradox of choice" (Schwartz 2004). This amounts to an integration of so many variables into a model of decision-making that the decision-making itself becomes impossible due to the overlapping uncertainties.

More often, I think, overthinking simply causes bad results. When a model, or a logical process is too complex, its variables stop bringing marginal utility, making the "fast and frugal [single] heuristic" not just cheap, but far more accurate.

16.7 On Fat Tails and Uncertainty

That said, there is one area, totally absent in experimental circumstances, but ubiquitous in real-life that logical deduction cannot by definition model. That is raw uncertainty, especially in circumstances when potential down-sides are cataclysmic: Black Swans.

A common denominator behind many "biases" is an "irrational" fear of the unknown, the alien and a bias for the familiar. This comes in many forms, from an experimental participant sticking at a suboptimal, yet familiar choice to him fundamentally not trusting what an experimenter has told him about an experiment.

In the face of uncertainty, especially in the face of potentially dangerous uncertainty, what is statistically "rational" changes dramatically. As Taleb (2018) puts it "Outcomes that entail ruin make sequences path dependent and noncommutative". This means that average payoff, even expected utility are dangerous things to consider when there is even a small risk of getting "ruined". Experimental regulations prevent us from threatening participants with genuine "ruin", but even if we could, the relevant real-world situation is not only risky ruin, but *uncertain* ruin.

This makes established paths highly rational. If I can avoid substantial risk, or uncertainty, any sensible person would be willing to forego otherwise larger average payoffs or expected utility. But since these situations are difficult to reproduce in experimental cir-

cumstances, there has arisen the idea that these hedging behaviors on the part of humans are useless. A typical observer paradox.

Much of human behavior, especially that most seemingly "irrational" is the result of us keeping away from uncertainty. Taleb (2012) even hypothesizes that the most "irrational" thing that humans do, religion, is largely a helpful antidote to engaging in uncertainty. In an era of iatrogenic and uncertain medical treatment (today and in yesteryear) it's a much more ecologically rational thing to appease one's felt need to "do something" about a non-severe medical condition by praying at the Temple of Apollo rather than going to a doctor and taking fragilizing and potentially harmful medication. Prayer is powerful precisely because it does nothing.

Taleb (2015) has even gone so far as to claim that "moral failures" such as procrastination are ecologically rational: as most non-acute problems, resolve themselves over time, or more convenient solutions will arise to these problems. Just yesterday I was reminded of this as I had, for two months, procrastinated buying a shuttle ticket I needed for a flight out of Phoenix. Sure enough, I received a random call from a friend who volunteered to drive me herself, which means my procrastination saved me an easy $50. Even more, if I hadn't procrastinated writing up this paper until the last minute, I wouldn't be able to include this anecdote in the paper (along with many other things I ran into).

16.8 Heuristics as Exaptation

One question which I haven't addressed is the issue of the origin of the effectiveness of heuristics and biases. If they are systematically effective, sometimes superior tools, what keeps them up to snuff? If they are so well calibrated to the needs of humans, what keeps them as such?

A superficial response would be natural selection, that is, heuristics and biases have evolved to specific ends and exist as such. I don't

think this is a sufficient answer. On one side, many of these heuristics seem almost too local and too synchronically to have been selected, and secondly this would require a particularly Neo-Darwinian interpretation of evolution in the first place.

Part of this stems from a general skepticism of the coherence of natural "selection" as a concept (see Fodor and Piattelli-Palmarini (2010)). With respect to the construction of evolutionary just-so stories, this is an important critique, but our narrative here does not necessarily relied on it.

I think there is another sensible alternative. It has been argued (Gould 1991; M. Piattelli-Palmarini 1989) many of the unique traits developed in evolution are not in fact traits "selected" for, but arise by happenstance, often emerging, and are then employed to different ends as needed. That is exaptations.

That is — to say that heuristics, and how and when they are used are all well calibrated to the human environment is not to say that the heuristics are physiologically present in the mind-brain, nor is it to say that they were chosen by natural selection. It's equally as easy to these heuristics were exaptive (Buss et al. 1998) or spandrels in the sense of Gould and Lewontin (1979), brought about by happenstance and repurposed for new ends.

This I think is much *more* consistent with the psychological reality of heuristics and biases than a selectionist approach. Indeed, Gigerenzer (2008) addresses heuristics not as evolutionarily selected, but saying that they "exploit evolved capacities", or in other words, as exaptations. Heuristics in Gigerenzer (ibid.)'s terminology, mental heuristics are not ingrained mental tunnels, but an adaptive toolbox or different general capacities which are evoked ad hoc to be useful when they are found to be so.

The same sentiment is echoed by Anderson (1990), where cognition itself is adaptive. The problem with a selectionist account is that it fails to predict the real-time adaptivity of heuristics and biases.

16.9 Are we more reasonable?

One last point. Over the past several decades psychologists have noticed a secular rise in IQ scores, eventually dubbed "the Flynn Effect" by Herrnstein and Murray (1994) (named after the realizations of Flynn (1987)).

Efforts to attribute this rise to a spectacular genetic factor are not generally accepted or are variously vexed (Woodley 2011), while even recent research seems to vindicate that the Flynn Effect is most saliently correlated with an increased reliance on abstract reasoning (Must et al. 2016).

Thus the general accepted reason of this increase is not a general rise in actual intelligence or g, but precisely this increased use of abstractness in thought (Flynn 2007). In essence, we are scoring higher on IQ tests not because our cognitive abilities have increased, but because we have become better at the abstract reasoning common in them. We live in a culture which compared to 100 years ago puts a strong emphasis on abstract and deliberative thought, and non-Western countries are variously gravitating to this norm.

But the central realization of Flynn (1987) is that while our IQ scores are 20 or so points higher, and while IQ generally is an extremely strong predictor of life performance, creativity and achievement, these 20 points seem to be only on paper. We live in a more abstract world, with standardized tests, the statistics of fantasy football and brainteasers, but this abstractness has not been rewarded with a "cognitive renaissance" that Flynn (2007) hypothesizes would accompany a genuine rise in g of that magnitude. We have a more "intellectual" vibe, but it's a practical pretense. We aren't really more intelligent than we were before.

16.10 Closing

I think it's somewhat reasonable to say that this move to mental abstractness is a general cultural change of which even the heuristics-and-biases framework is a tacit member. As part of this trend, the heuristics-and-biases program idealizes formal logic, consistent statistics and deductive reasoning, but that isn't to say that these are essentially superior to our reasoning without them.

As I said before, if anything, more complex logical models mean more dimensionality and more grounds for bad modeling and analysis paralysis. I don't see there as being any fundamental difference between heuristics and biases on one hand and "reason" on the other, but would argue they are only different scales of the same thing. Reason is built on heuristics and it's heuristics all the way down. But there's nothing to worry about, because simple is better, even in cognition.

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17 The Problems with Utilitarianism - May 5, 2021

I originally wrote this essay in 2014 or 2015 in a Chinese buffet in Athens, Georgia. I've changed some of it and am re-adding it here. I talk about the issues with Utilitarianism and a bad book by Sam Harris.

17.1 Utilitarianism

At a dumb intuitive level, the "ethical" idea of [Utilitarianism].dfn in principle gets pretty close to what most people reflexively want from social-political affairs: the greatest good for the greatest number of people—who doesn't want that?

The problem is that that intuitive idea is incoherent. It sounds good, but there's not really such a thing as "the greatest good for the greatest number of people." If there were, it wouldn't even be actionable.

17.2 "Maximizing"

So the first problem is one any mathematician will realize right off the bat: it's rarely possible to maximize a function for two variables.

If we had the means, we could maximize (1) the amount of good in society or (2) the number of people who feel that good, but nearly certainly not both (if we can it's a bizarre coincidence).

It's sort of like saying you want to find a house with the highest available altitude and the lowest available price; the highest house might not have the lowest price and vice versa, the same way the way of running society which maximizes happiness is nearly certainly not be the way which maximizes all individuals' happiness.

There are some classic moral puzzles that bring this out: Let's say there's a city where basically everyone is in absolute ecstasy, but their

ecstasy can only take place if one particular person in the city is in intense and indescribable pain. Or to put it another way, to maximize my happiness, we might need to make everyone in the world my slave and allow me to rule as I please. Although this might maximize my happiness, it might not maximize anyone else's (if it does however, we might want to consider it).

17.3 The Well-being of Conscious Creatures

So I recently read Sam Harris's *The Moral Landscape* which is either a failed attempt to bring Utilitarianism back to life or a misguided book simply ignorant of what the problems with it were. I don't actually recall Harris using the term "utilitarianism," although that is really just what he's arguing for.

Harris repeats one mantra basically every paragraph of the book: "the well-being of conscious creatures—the well-being of conscious creatures—the well-being of conscious creatures." In addition to being repetitive, the term is problematic for important reasons. So Harris wants our Utilitarian engineers to maximize "the well-being of conscious creatures," but the problem is we can't just add up enjoyment in the first place. There's no way of taking my enjoyment of candy, subtracting the pain of a broken nose and adding/subtracting an existential crisis or two.

Now his hope is eventually we'll understand the neurology of the brain enough to do just that. I don't take Harris for a fool, and he does have a Ph.D. in neuroscience (obviously I am being sarcastic), but I think he's ignoring all the important problems either to appeal to a public audience or just to convince himself. We can study the neurology of feelings and get readings of neural activity, but objective neural activity is certainly not subjective experience. Twice as much neural activity doesn't mean "twice" the subjective experience.

We can no better look at brain activation to understand subjective experience any better than we can look at the hot parts of a computer

to see what it's doing.

17.3.1 You can't do math with feelings

Of course one of the problems of qualia/subjective experience is that they are necessarily unquantifiable: imagine how you felt the last time you got a present you really enjoyed—now imagine yourself feeling exactly twice as happy—now 1.5 times as happy—now 100 times as happy.

You can't do it, and even if you could, you couldn't compare that experience with other experiences—you can't really understand what it means to be as happy as you were sad a month ago, and that prevents us from actually adding up your experiences into one number to be maximized.

But again even if we could it would be impossible to add that number up with someone else's experience. Humans have different subjective experiences: caffeine affects me demonstrably different than other people, but I can't quantify that; some people are more affected by pain (to my understanding, women seem to have a neurology more pain-prone than men), but how can we precisely relate the precise ratios of every individual person?

And of course, although Harris wants to maximize "the well-being of conscious creatures," we have no clue what kinds of conscious experiences define animal life, or how many animals are "conscious" in any recognizable sense. As Thomas Nagel noted, we can't even begin to imagine what it's like to be a bat, but to quantify their experiences and compare them to our own? Forget about it!

Douglas Adams in his *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* presented the idea of a genetically engineered cow which not only was made to be able to speak, but to enjoy the prospect of being eaten and encourage others to kill and eat him. Experience itself is not some kind of thing arbiter of morality. Pain, in fact, might be a negligible or incomplete guide to what is not good. Children have to put up with being drug

around to do many things they don't enjoy. That doesn't mean some immorality in anything.

The philosophical problems here are so endless as to make any kind of objective application of Utilitarianism based on neuroscience far beyond even fancy. I will be so bold as to say that this will simply never be possible, regardless of what chips Elon Musk wants to put in your brain.

17.3.2 To repeat:

- We cannot quantify any particular feeling.
- On top of that, we cannot compare the values of different feelings.
- On top of that, we certainly not weigh the subjective feelings of all humans or beasts against other humans' feelings.
- On top of that, even if we could do that, we can't maximize for utility in such a way to maximize all individual happiness and collective happiness simultaneously.

Utilitarianism isn't just impossible, it's impossible every step of the way.

To be clear, these are not technological problems that a future totalitarian government might be able to "solve." There really is no coherent sense in which we can put a number to a certain feeling of happiness and subtract from that another person's feeling of unhappiness. Qualia are qualia. It's like subtracting the sound of an airplane from the color blue.

17.4 What Utilitarianism really is

Anyway, the tradition of Utilitarianism was always a failure, but it's an interesting sign of the times. The Enlightenment was a time of some (less than usually thought) scientific advancement and the idea

was that as we began to understand the nature of the body and the stars and everything else, we could fully understand too human society.

Eventually we could engineer and control them all. But as fast as we learn things about the world, even faster do complications arise and we end up "[restoring nature's] ultimate secrets to that obscurity, in which they ever did and ever will remain" in Hume's words.

The only really unfortunate thing is that the ruling class of the West either doesn't know or does care. There's a cynical sense in which they are attempting to re-engineer or "Build Back Better®" the world on Utilitarian principles where every decision is determined to be acceptable by some centralized utilitarian calculus.

18 Conspiratorial Thinking and "Multiple Outs" - May 5, 2021

18.1 How to do magic tricks...

Magicians have this concept called "Multiple Outs." It's actually how you can do simple magic tricks. Suppose you have a person pick a card and say you will guess the suit of their card.

They pick a diamond card and announce it, and you tell them to check underneath their chair to reveal a slip of paper that says, "You will pick a diamond card."

That might sound like a nice trick, but if they had picked a spade, you have another piece of paper under the fruitbowl that says, "You will pick a spade." If they pick a club, you unbutton your shirt to reveal a giant club written on your undershirt, etc.

In essence, for any possible outcomes, you have a response planned that seems natural and predictive. This is one of the ways that magicians do what they do, often with more complicated mechanisms.

18.2 Applications

Multiple outs are actually real magic.

You've heard the expression "hope for the best and plan for the worst," but the concept of multiple outs is that one should be planning for *all possible* outcomes, including those that you yourself might not even anticipate now.

Every business plan should have multiple outs. Your major life decisions should be planned with multiple outs. You should even tacitly plan dates with multiple outs, so that unexpected events can be met with a confident, perhaps even better replacements.

Multiple outs in political power Any longstanding group in political power is by the mere fact of their survival sure to have mastered the sleight of hand of "multiple outs."

This serves not only to continue in political power, but to cement their power further by the appearance of inevitability. A ruler or ruling class puts themselves in a position to benefit from any possible occurrence: be ready even to use disaster to your benefit, as Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel put it succinctly: "You never let a serious crisis go to waste."

18.2.1 Conspiracy?

People skeptical of the state sometimes devolve into thinking that every major political event is in one way or another is planned in advance. This is because they don't understand and apply the concept of multiple outs. They see that their rulers are good at benefiting from any chaos or unforeseen events, so assume these events must've been engineered.

Look at the corona virus: it's a great example of an event that has hugely benefited a small elite: it has bankrupted small businesses in favor of Amazon, destroyed churches and mom and pop stores in favor of passively consooming digital infotainment from curated social

media sites and more. It is a rationalization of state location and contact monitoring and things far beyond what anyone dreamed of. It was a rationalization for sending out unsolicited ballots to unverified voter rolls which had very obvious beneficiaries. It has produced a cult of doomsday believers crying for the state to lock them in their houses and make them wear fetishistic masks.

Seeing all this and asking who benefits, "Cui bono?" might lead you to think that the whole thing was planned: perhaps the disease itself is fake, or maybe it was real, but spread on purpose, or perhaps it was engineered. You've probably seen stuff like this, and while I won't dismiss this kind of thinking out of hand, it's unnecessary.

In reality, the ruling classes of the West have openly prepared to benefit from a pandemic scenario. COVID19 was deemed "closed enough" to a pandemic, and the momentum of the system took over. It's not even that they wanted it to happen, but they were prepped to benefit from it as a contingency plan if it might occur.

18.2.2 The Conspiracy Rabbit Hole and the Omnipotent Cathedral

There are some people who see how the ruling class is in a position to benefit from every school-shooting, police encounter, foreign entanglement, dissident politician and everything else and thus assume that everything they see must be arranged in advance. There is a logic behind believing this: it does seem way to convenient for all of this to happen at what retroactively seems to the best time, but this leads people to the much more uneconomical idea that the System is so omnipotent that it controls every event and every reaction to every event.

In reality, our rulers just know how to use multiple outs. When you know how to do that, it seems like you are always in control, and by nature, people attribute a kind of magical power to you. All you have to do is stay cool and play it off like you predicted it all.

18.2.3 This is why "the System" always seem to win.

The system knows how to play with multiple outs.

There is a canned response, or at least a reasonably ad-libbed response, for every event and every possible event. They are in a position of antifragility and can gain from nearly any possible event. When they can't, the media can at least throw enough mud on public perception to inspire apathy or confusion.

There are certainly portions of the System which are "conspiratorial." Major news organizations usually coordinate on what editorial line to publish, but in general, their entrenched power comes from a detached ability to be flexible in new events.

The omnipotence and permanence of the Soystem is illusory. It comes from that flexibility.

18.3 Multiple outs in your life

Even aside from politics, it's important to behave yourself in a way that allow yourself to have multiple outs. Business, social life, major decisions and in everything else. Never tether yourself to one option; that's when you lose. Have a smart response to co-opt anything that can happen, no matter how good or bad.

19 Modern "Freedom" Means Being a Slave to Impulses - May 6, 2021

19.1 What does freedom mean?

See this article in video form here.

Which of the following two people is more free:

1. A drug addict.

2. A average man who is only not a drug addict because he lives in a country where drugs are regulated or shamed in a way to make them hard to obtain.

Most modern people will have a kind of cognitive dissonance, a kind of glitch in their matrix here. In the modern view of freedom, freedom means the ability to do what you want without the government or society telling you what to do, so (1), the drug addict, should be more "free."

But at the same time, this feels wrong. (2) probably lives a better life. He is more suited to make more and better decisions. Someone addicted to drugs is highly constrained in the kind of life they have to live to fulfill their addiction.

Even extreme libertarians will probably say (2) is in a better place, but might chalk things up to (1) needing to have more discipline and they'll make up some just-so story as for why unambiguously bad drugs, or pornography, or dangerous things should be allowed anyway.

19.2 Classical freedom

In reality, since the Enlightenment, we have had a hobbled understanding of what "freedom" is. Enlightenment "freedom" is only the freedom to perfectly follow the whims of impulses and vices indiscriminately.

19.2.1 The Christian tradition

Christians stated the classical view of freedom very clearly. Paul writes that all men are either "slaves to Christ" or "slaves to sin."[1] The modern man wants to retort that he doesn't want to be a slave to anything, but wants to be his own master, but there is really no such thing.

[1] Romans 7:25

One can be guided by Christ, or more generally, by consistent moral principles, restraint and forethought. Or one can abandon the pretense of morality and by definition follow his impulses to fornication, substance-abuse, and general reckless living.

These masters aren't equivalent either. Being a slave to one is nothing like being a slave to another. Slaves to sin are wrapped up into incoherent and uncontrollable behavior. Following one's sexual whims might be inconsistent and thoughtless behavior that one likes one second and is disgusted by the next. It might mean someone exploding in rage and emotion.

This "free" man, a slave to sin, is only bound by the practical consideration that he might get caught or shamed by "prudes" and that might dampen his ability to follow his inpulses more.

19.2.2 Impulses are not the man

If we look at the modern world as if it has desires and goals for us, it certainly seems like it is trying to induce as many people as possible into being slave to sin. People no long have identity in who they actually are, but in accidental preferences formed over years of impulse-seeking: their sexual fetishes, drugs of choice, their favorite TV show to consoom or their favorite music they constantly pump in their head to dampen the possibility that an original reflective thought might occur to them.

More than that, these people often can't even fathom of life without their master sins, and retort in rage when someone dares to direct

them otherwise or "judge" them. They don't just have a kind of Stockholm Syndrome with sin, but they can't comprehend the fact the people are something deeper than their pleasure habits.

19.2.3 Control of Impulses Leads to Freedom

However if one can constrain his impulses, he will be free to truly sit down and deliberate and make free decisions on what is best to do.

This is where true freedom begins. The concept is totally alien to the coomer, the slave to sin, because he can't even afford the mental space to think further than his constant service to sin.

To him, it is merely "me having fun," versus "some haters who are against fun."

19.3 Slaves to Vices are Slaves in General

If you indentify with your impulses, it's very easy to get you motivated to defend them with the same impulsivity if you are told that they are "under attack." While impulsive people might be hard to be around as individuals, they are easy to control as groups and can be herded around like unthinking sheep.

People who are reactive in politics are always the losers, and what is an impulsive life but one that is entirely reactive and therefore controllable?

19.4 The Kingly State

With the classical understanding of freedom, the goal of social conventions, traditional morality and the good government is to increase

true liberty by minimizing one's temptation to vice. People are born with some tendency to vice (original sin to Chrisitians) that can be easily made worse. The goal of normal society is to lead people away from lasciviousness and impulsive behavior. (That is clearly not the goal of the modern West, however.)

A drug addict is not free. A teenager who gets home from school everyday, closes his door and watches internet pornography is not free. A person who compulsively checks their social media feed when they wake up or are minorly bored is not free. A woman who sleeps around throughout her twenties and is left with nothing is not free. A boy who stays up late because he has to "grind" on a video game is not free.

No one can say that these people truly want what they do: no one *fully* consents to any impulsive behavior. This is actually why in the Catholic tradition, sins of incontinence are not as grave as deliberate sins. It's not a fair game.

Either way, the goal of the church, or a moral society and moral government generally, is to increase freedom by being a countervailing power to inborn vices.

The point of moral instruction is not to restrain man, but to make him more free by eliminating the true causes of his enslavement: his vices, his bad habits, his sexual paraphilias, his gluttony and greed.

20 Obscenities are symptoms of weak minds - Sep 3, 2021

Over the past few years, I made the decision to totally cut obscenities out from my speech. You might actually be able to find recordings of me cursing four or five years ago, but as of now, I really stand by my decision.

Obscenities are the linguistic equivalent of an trashy emaciated person entirely decked in tattoos, smoking cigarettes and wearing a

shirt with nudity on it. They'll defend what they do on the idea that it's someone "their right," or "expression," as if they do what they do for some lofty philosophical reason. What everyone else sees is a person who is not in control of themselves or their vices, in fact, someone who views their vices as a good thing.

There's the atomistic and nihilistic tendency to give an "intellectual" argument for obscenities: "What's so special," the argument goes, "about obscenities in English? They're just a combination of arbitrary sounds! They don't have some objective magical harm in them."

But the "arbitrary sounds" in an obscenity do indeed have a special place in human psychology. Obscenities are produced and processed in the brain quite differently from non-obscene language, involving the more animalistic/reptilian parts of the brain. When assembling a well-thought out case, there is really never a temptation to litter it with curses.

When a person curses, it's a direct indication that they are thinking on a lower, more reactive, more emotional level.

I get a lot of email every day and most I don't answer for time constraints. I've gotten good at filtering out emails, and I have realized that obscenities are one of the best indications of a low quality content. I haven't gone so far as to totally block curse words with Spam Assassin, but it is genuinely rare that I receive an email of any quality with obscenities.

All of this is to say that obscenities are a great indication of reactive thinking. When someone is cursing, he is thinking at least in part like an animal. In deciding not to curse, I have decided to be quiet first, then only evaluate things calmly afterwards.

For me, there is extra reason not to curse because I am in a position of an exemplar for many people on the internet. The internet is full of "snarky" people cursing profusely and creating the idea that all "famous" people should be highly arrogant and emotional.

There might be times when it's proper for someone to react in righteous anger, but those are in reality so rare as to only happen in life-and-death situations. Instead, a lot of modern nihilism is becoming just as emotionally transfixed on minor slights and imaginary problems, thus one spews out curses as if one is fighting some kind of crusade. This makes profuse cursers not only the type of people who are reactive and hard to relate to, but indicates how disordered their priorities are.

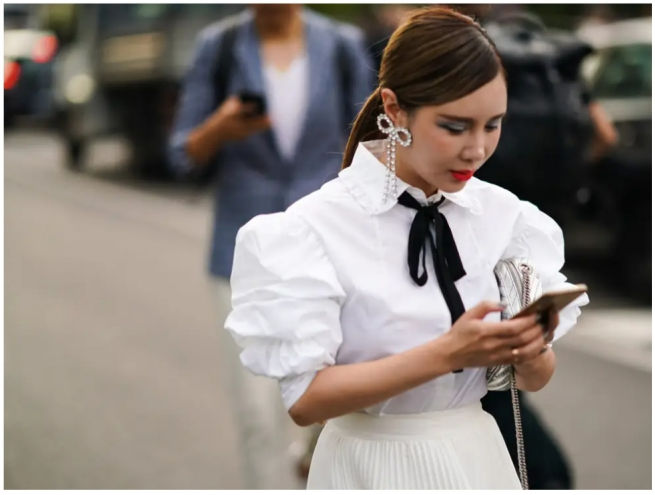
21 Minimizing Liabilities Is Making It. - July 16, 2022

The default way to look at financial "independence" nowadays is to think that means "making a lot of money." That's understandable.

But then you see stuff like this:

60% of millennials earning over $100,000 say they're living paycheck to paycheck

Hillary Hoffower Updated Sep 16, 2021, 10:19 AM



High-earning millennials are stretching their paychecks.
Edward Berthelot/Getty Images

Or this:

Average Millennial Net Worth By Age

Age	Average Millennial Net Worth
35 (Class of 2003)	$20,236
34 (Class of 2004)	$17,351
33 (Class of 2005)	$13,599
32 (Class of 2006)	$9,896
31 (Class of 2007)	$6,036
30 (Class of 2008)	$2,093
29 (Class of 2009)	-$1,989
28 (Class of 2010)	-$6,043
27 (Class of 2011)	-$10,168
26 (Class of 2012)	-$14,447
25 (Class of 2013)	-$18,988
24 (Class of 2014)	-$23,704
23 (Class of 2015)	-$28,706
22 (Class of 2016)	-$33,984
21	-$38,915
20	-$27,129
19	-$18,086
18	-$8,893

It takes until 30 for a person to be as rich as they were when they were born. (And this is average net worth, median would be significantly worse.)

The longer you mentally analyze the second picture, the more depressing it will get. Obviously the negative net worth early in life is kids losing around $10,000 a year in value by going to college, but the truly depressing thing is that after that period, their net worth increases only by an average of about $5,000 a year.

That means they might have $5,000 more in the bank or $5,000 paid off of their student loans or $5,000 going to equity in a house, but no combination greater than that.

21.1 How does this happen?

How is it that people alive in the period of the highest and most productive technology are working more than Medieval serfs?

Let's put it in simple terms by defining "making it:"

Making it: Earning or having significantly more money than you spend or owe. Or in pseudomath:

$$\text{income - liabilities} = \text{comfortability}$$

To increase comfortablity, you can increase your income or decrease your liabilities. This is a simple equation.

By "liabilities" I mean:

- the cost of food you have to eat to live
- the cost of the place you need to live
- the payments for goods and services you actually need (power, or perhaps a car, etc.)
- debts

The *problem* I would estimate is that people focus **all of their time, money and interest on increasing their income and focus quite literally none on decreasing their liabilities**, which is actually substantially easier anyway.

In fact, the modern economy, including all the bad advice it gives to people can generally be thought of a system that is desperatly trying to *increase* everyone's liabilities within it. Financial libabilities, debt and others, breed even more financial liabilities.

21.1.1 The Lifestory of Basically Everyone Nowadays

Let's illustrate this with the story of most people you know:

1. "I'm going to the best college I can because everyone told me to."
2. "I need to pay off my $40,000+ in student loans, so I need to move to the city and get a good job."
3. "I get paid well, so I need a better car and other stuff to match."
4. "I still have loan debt, car debt and now credit card debt, but now I have a good credit score, so I'll use all my savings to pay 20% of an expensive house I'll be paying off for 25 years."
5. "Oh my boss wants me to humiliate myself for sodomy month or get the Coofid vaccine or the Mark of the Beast to keep my job. I have at least a quarter of a mil invested in my life here, so I can't just leave. Be realistic."
6. "Yeah the economy is really bad and I lost a lot of investments. Either way, this is my career and what I'm trained for. It'd be hard to retrain. I made the right choices, I just got unlucky."
7. "Well, I'm 60 and it's time for retirement! Now that my body is broken I can start enjoying life!"
8. *Dies of seed-oil-induced heart attack.*

It'd be wrong to singularly blame student loans for all of this, but there is a tangible sense in which opening up any new massive monthly liability to the system encourages people to open up more to cover for it.

No one is ever told that this is the inevitable end of increasing liabilities: you need more and more liabilities.

21.1.2 "Which way Millennial?"

Millennials come in two financial categories: around 90% of them are extreme consoomers who cannot not spend every penny of their salaries on subscriptions, plastic toys and coffee and seem to view the fact they get calls from collections agencies as some unpreventable outcome of "capitalism."

The other 10% are the exact opposite: they are contemplating living in the trunk of their 1990's Corolla parked in the parking lot of their job site so they can save 97% of their income. When they plan on buying a house or getting married, they are quixotically salivating on how much money they can save on monthly bills.

21.2 The Endgame

I will go ahead and say, I consider the ideal not even to be rich, but to not need money to live a comfortable life because you have put yourself in a geographic and behavioral position where you can survive on as little as possible.

Either way, my mindset (as the second type of millennial) has always been "How can I absolutely minimize the amount of money I need to live?"

- "What is the cheapest place to rent?"
- "What is the cheapest-per-calorie real food for me to eat?"
- "What "needs" are not really needs and can I go without?"

The implicit goal was to live on as little as possible: that's what actually maximizes your life's freedom. If you can live on less than, say, $500 a month, even working as a part-time wagie, you will be plenty to pay bills, save a significant amount and have lots of free time.

For young single guys in computer science, this is especially ideal, since your hobbey/craft doesn't cost anything to tinker with.

In my late twenties, right before I bought my house, I was living in a college town with a monthly budget **including my rent** of around $400 ($300 was rent $100 was basically groceries). Probably went over that $100 most months, but never by much. This is also when I started churning credit cards to make a significant portion of my little expenditure back.

21.3 Behavioral Patterns over Life

As you're saving money to buy/pay off a permanent dwelling place, most important is cultivating permanent behaviors that will reduce your need for money and "the system."

If you take the "high"-income, high-liability route, you're going to be establishing wasteful antipatterns your early life and when you need to buckle down and root those out, it will be more difficult because it will be the egotistically trying task of going from showly and "easy" pleasure spending to a Spartan budget.

It's much easier to have a solid foundation of low spending. I said in that video years ago on getting Trumpbux that all money you earn and spend should be directly weaponized to decrease your reliance on money. Property, tools, plants, skills. These are investments much more substantial than investing in boomer stocks because they lessen your need for money.

21.3.1 Worst Case Scenario

As a passing remark, I'll add that the other benefit of focusing on minimizing liabilities is that it makes you significantly less reliant on "the system" and more robust in the case of disaster.

"Training" to get a highly specific corporate job is not going to help you in all possible scenarios in the way that simple the simple

craftsmanship of someone who fixes their own cars and things.

22 'Based' Paganism vs. Christianity - July 29, 2022

I've been meaning to write about Paganism recently. I will frame it as a response to an email I received within the past day or so:

Hey Luke,

First off, I would like to thank you for all your efforts in making everything you know accessible to everyone. You have exposed me to some of the most thought-provoking people on the internet and Varg is one of them. I was wondering if you can write an article or make a video on what you think about Varg's Paganism in relation to you choosing Orthodox Christianity. I know that you briefly talked about it in one of your livestreams, however, I would like to better understand why you don't practice Paganism yourself. My background is Serbian and most Serbians follow the Serbian Orthodox Church, but after watching Varg's videos, I'm conflicted. I agree with a lot of what Varg says about Christianity, but my father long ago told me to follow the Serbian Orthodox Church if I were to become religious. I'm sure that many people feel the same way after watching Varg's videos, and your thoughts on it would greatly help people like me make up their minds.

Best, redacted

I will sum up my answer to this email in bullet points, then explain what I mean.

- Modern "paganism" is not a real thing and has nothing to do

with paganism in history.

- The most direct cultural link between modern man and antiquity is the orthodox Christian Church.
- Truth matters—"Picking" a religion on personal preferences is brain-dead and self-refuting.

22.1 Your Average Pagan

Many people probably don't know who Varg Vikernes is, but since the email brings him up, I will talk about him as an example of where paganism leads. Modern "paganism" is not an authentic tradition handed down over the ages. It is an attempt of modern disconnected people to recreate or re-engineer a culture, time and place they have absolutely no contact with. This ultimately makes "paganism" a modernist Rorschach test where individuals can more-or-less create the religion they want.

22.1.1 Paganism with modern goggles

Varg's particular "paganism" is a kind of scientific euhemerism: he doesn't actually believe in gods in the way an ancient pagan would have, but that the concepts of the gods represent scientific or other knowledge. (This is where the placenta meme around him comes from after all, when he and his wife related assorted pagan myths and items to the tree-like appearance of a human placenta.) He has also reduced classical abstract spiritual concepts into hormones and other related things. In essence, he has created a pseudo-paganism that is compatible with modern materialism.

Varg had cited and recommended works such as Frazer's *Golden Bough* as influential on his thought which is of a similar vein. This book was part of a wider movement in the English-speaking rationalist world to rationalize and explain myth. It goes without saying that

I think this all comes from the assumption of modern man that all ancient people underlyingly thought like Neil deGrasse Tyson.

22.1.2 How long until legend becomes myth?

More plausible is the viewpoint I've spoken of in works such as *Hamlet's Mill*. It alleges that one specific prehistoric civilization used myth to transmit scientific knowledge, but being thousands of years out from that civilization, the descendant stories are distorted, partial and can only be related after extensive study. They allege that "Hamlet stories" are similar in origin and actually carry astrological information, including the idea of the procession of the equinoxes.

But Varg's quasi-euhemerism makes a much stronger claim, that all our "forebears" (as he tends to call them) left an entire encyclopedia of scientific knowledge in stories that have remained unblemished and mostly unchanged over thousands or millions of years since the Neanderthals, who he views as the Trve Europeans.

This stronger claim should be absurd on its face, as it assumes that over the millennia, there is little to no addition, subtraction or change of folklore. The *Hamlet's Mill* model admits that this does happen, but Varg is dealing with a much longer scale and often makes very specific claims about some myths. What I think Varg is truly doing when he looks at a pagan myth and sees a placenta, he is seeing statistical noise and fitting that noise to the many possibilities in his head. (I will also say that this is somewhat the modus operandi of many capital-T "Traditionalists" in the vein of Evola or Guénon.)

This is principally a response to the theories that Varg put forth around 2016-2018 when I would occasionally watch his videos. I'm sure it's very possible that he endorses things very different now, since this "paganism" is not anything concrete.

22.2 Is Christianity a departure from European tradition?

One thing I've tried to emphasize in some places is the general wrongness of the idea of the cultural "quantum leap" or "discontinuity" between Prechristian and Christian Europe. This is a highly important issue for many putative pagans, because they view the "change" of Europe over to Christianity as perhaps the start of the now constant and perpetual leftist cultural revolution.

This is the idea, which most people and "based" pagans have even by osmosis, that the Christianization of Europe was a radical break from history and tradition.

This is true only on the Christian metric: obviously the salvation of Europe is a quantum leap. However, melodramatic pagans will lament that this is when Europe have up its "European" soul and adopted a "Jewish" or "desert" religion which put the continent on a totally different and out-of-touch cultural direction.

22.2.1 Pagan Philosophy and Christianity

Christian theology, including Trinitarian theology has direct and undeniable "pagan" analogues and imitators: Neoplatonism expresses a kind of theological trinity as well (the One, the Intellect and the Soul), albeit one more similar to Origen's trinity where a hierarchy of the three persons exist.

In the cosmogony of the Poemandres, a Hermetic work, shows a pagan creation myth wherein God creates the world via his Logos, as in the first chapter of St. John's gospel, which also has a trinitarian and monotheistic unity with God (differing from Christianity in its panentheism).

As I mentioned in the linked podcast episode above, Stoic philosophy is a component needed to understand the opening of the gospel of John and is part of the philosophical backdrop of early Christian theology.

Medieval esoteric doctrines and alchemy viewed all of nature as trinitarian, possessing body, mind, and spirit (salt, sulfur and mercury), which was related directly to the Triune nature of God. Even specific mystical sects like Mithraism or the many forms of Gnosticism are tied closely to the development of Christianity.

All of these intellectual strands were intertwined with Christianity since the beginning of the written expression of Christian theology.

A pagan now has to ask himself: if Hermeticism or Mithraism had taken over as a universal religion of Europe, would they loathe it like they loathe Christianity and view it as a radical departure from "paganism?" Note that Hermeticism had an alleged Egyptian origin, and Mithraism had a orientalist/Iranic origin.

Note that none of my point here is specifically that Christianity influenced or created these other philosophies or that they influenced (providentially) Christianity. What is important is that looking at it dispassionately, we cannot deem Christianity as some cultural departure from "real" European culture without also throwing out this entire philosophical tradition as a whole.

Medieval Christians would often look at Greek Philosophy as another covenant of God established to prepare mankind intellectually for the revelation of the Trinity. (Note also that Dante and others represent Christians who viewed the Roman Empire also as part of a divine plan.)

Ultimately, the Christian religion is non-cultural and thus universal/catholic. There are cultural aspects associated with it, but there's a difference between essence and accidents. Of those cultural aspects, they are nearly all European, not, as some allege, Hebrew or Jewish. Most of the New Testament is quite literally an explication of why this religion which accepts the Hebrew Scriptures is markedly non-Jewish and why Jewish practices like circumcision and sacrifice are sacrilegious.

So the view we should get from this is that Christianization was

no cultural leap into an alien worldview, but something whose intellectual side happened slowly over centuries and would only be viewed as spiritual, not culturally distinct from its environment.

22.2.2 Which change is good?

Note that even Varg admits that religious interpretation and practice changes with the centuries. In his interpretation and even in his RPG, MYFAROG (which is really just an expression of his paganism and worldview), characters can have one of two "Life Stances" or religious inclinations: Seiðr or Âsatrû. Seiðr "tradition," represents a kind of animism, witchcraft or spell-casting, while Âsatrû represents the worship of pagan gods. Characters can choose either life stance, but one can only change from Seiðr to Âsatrû, which is a representation of the alleged historical shift in early history from animistic to polytheistic practices.

If we accept this cultural transition as "legitimate" in terms of cultural continuity, on what grounds could we also mark as verboten a shift from polytheism to monotheism? After all, the pagan philosophy of Plato and Aristotle even from the earliest was monotheistic at its core, and even today, the world's one remaining "polytheistic" religion, Hinduism only appears so on the surface, but has at its core its own monad and final cause: Brahman.

22.3 Tradition vs. Inventing your own religion

To learn of Christian theology, thus, is to set oneself down a road of millennia of learning with often with no delineation between Christian and Prechristian thought. By the same token, learning of secular philosophy, even as an atheist might lead you to Christianity, as was the case with me. There is no obvious discontinuity, either in thought or practice.

But modern day "paganism" does indeed have such a gap. To be a "pagan" does not involve communing with a centuries-old tradition passed down generation-to-generation from antiquity.

It is modern people imagining based on T.V. shows, books and their own creativity what Prechristian Europe was like and then putting on their own imitation of it. They might see something they dislike in the world, blame it on Christians and then imagine a world without it. This invariably comes with retrojecting their own modern values and assumptions on the past.

After all, we Christians can sit down with an Orthodox Priest or grow up in a Orthodox household and have a direct, personal contact with a tradition and understand how people who are part of it think and act. We have no tangible contact with Prechristian European paganism, even out of intellectual interest. Understanding how Europeans truly thought and acted is an issue of cultural reconstruction and theory. Traditional folklore and practices are still very much alive, but they are now decked in a Christian garb. We do celebrate Christmas for Our Lord's birth, but everyone knows that nearly all of the practices of that season of the many nations of Europe predate Christianization.

22.3.1 The Worst Possible Decision.

All this said, the absolute worst self-own possible would be someone who has direct and easy access to the Orthodox Church and abandons it or leaves it for a false "religion" that doesn't even exist off of the internet and has no organic connection to reality, like Neo-Paganism.

So my recommendation to the emailer above should be obvious.

Being physically close to the Orthodox Church is a huge asset, but even being able to travel to one occasionally is a massive grace. Everyone should be taking advantage of that as often as possible.

22.3.2 Pagan Gurus

Because it is ungrounded and ahistorical, modern "paganism" thus naturally exists as a kind of extreme Protestant guru-centered feel-goodery where since there is absolutely no tether to a genuine preserved tradition, a man can make up an unfalsifiable claim about what true "Paganism" is and sell it as legit.

I mentioned Varg earlier, who has concocted a "paganism" that consists in claiming that their lore and practice embed scientific information. He doesn't *believe* in pagan gods, unless we're talking about belief in a very evasive and meaningless Jordan Peterson kind of way. If we could actually transport a prehistoric pagan to our day and speak to him, he would probably either be confused or bemused by this very modern worldview, but we can't even do this.

Most pagans are not "based" like Varg anyway (he lives a minimalist and traditional lifestyle in rural France with an ever-growing family). Most "pagans" are leftists who like "paganism" because they hate God and nature and morality and imagine that pagans were demented sexual perverts like they are.

22.4 Truth

Notice that I had specifically avoided the most important issue: Truth.

I've done this because when people are asking to convert to something just because it's "based," *Truth* is unfortunately not necessarily their concern, so I've first addressed issues that do concern them.

The reality is, thankfully, that truth is the most "based" thing of all—And it is entirely cringe to believe in something because it sounds cool to you. If you think you can decide your own truth, you are no different from someone who thinks they can decide their own pronouns, literally.

Even in the email above, he refers to me "choosing" orthodox Christianity as if it were an issue of personal taste. If I liked pop music

and people rolling on the ground, perhaps I would be just as justified converting to some Pentecostal sect. This is silly.

The greatest deception is that religion is this separate category about "feelings" or "preference" and not truth. Atheist and spiritual R*dditor Stephen Jay Gould put this in words in the modern era, calling science and religion "non-overlapping magesteria," declaring in a laughable attempt at big-braned centrism that nothing in material reality is relevant to religion and nothing in religion is relevant to material reality.

This is strange because people can research the philosophies I mentioned earlier, Platonism, Gnosticism, Stoicism, Hermeticism and can analyze and critique them and look at them as models of reality perfectly comparable to modern philosophical assumptions and approaches. But we have been taught to view Christianity as this separate category, that can't possibly be a model of reality, but is a something merely "moral" or "personal" or "spiritual" which are all terms that have been debased to mean nothing at all.

A Christian believes that Jesus's resurrection was a true historical event, and a prelude of a general resurrection to come and that he established a Church and sacraments which are his vehicles for having man recover from sin within this life to prepare for his roles in the next. The orthodox Christian Church is an unbroken chain since that period, and oft built on yet older philosophical and liturgical practices.

If you find this alien or God unbelieveable, you can do yourself the favor of prayer and visit a priest and see what happens.

22.4.1 They don't even believe it.

To contrast, pagans do not believe in pagan gods. Their brains are 100% modern and materialistic in mindset, and if they ironically say they believe in gods, it is out of some kind of Petersonian fake metaphorical "belief" in a concept or that "Zeus" isn't a person, but is some kind of abstraction symbolizing the weather or something silly.

The only thing sillier is for them to claim that people in the ancient world *didn't really believe in them either*, but practiced entire religions meta-ironically for some social reasons. If they believe in a "spiritual" nature, it is not one beyond or above matter, but instead derived from it: it is psychological, hormonal, etc.

Modern paganism is neither a tradition, nor a religion, nor even a belief. It is just a new identity which supposedly flexes some kind of disposition to the world which is not even consistent across pagans because there is no basis for any of it.

22.4.2 Real Baste European Pagans

Christians, however, do believe in pagan gods. Christians have always admitted the reality of spiritual beings, including the demonic. You can take the Michael Heiser/Divine Council pill on this if you're interested: While there is only one Creator and Supreme God, he created many among his heavenly host, and originally appointed them to the different races on earth. Many rebelled and set themselves up as specific gods of their appointed races.

One of the purposes of Christ's coming was to vanquish these usurpers, and thus paganism/polytheism, which obviously has been successful. (Note that the Book of Enoch in Chapter 10 prophecies that these fallen angels would be judged 70 generations after the Enochian period, which cross-referencing with the Gospel of Luke, it is exactly 70 generations until Christ.) Now the issues of faith are not so much polytheism, but heresy and then atheism, which is a significant enough change in the cosmic dynamic.

23 Blockchain Blasphemy and the Technological Antichrist - Dec 10, 2022

There's a meme YouTube video by Leonardo of Biz (here) where the villainous Bogs refer to their desire to attain something called **"The Akashic Records"** using blockchain technology.

This random aside not just shows the attention to detail Leonardo gives what would otherwise be silly videos, but articulates something deeply troubling about a war unfolding over Bitcoin, Ethereum and other blockchain technology, but also technology generally.

Most normal people see this comment and ask…

23.1 "What are the Akashic Records?"

In the late 1800's, there emerged a group of spiritualists and scammers called *Theosophists*, principally followers of the eccentric Helena Blavatsky.

This New Age religion was a mishmash of perennialism and invented secret eastern teachings (which Blavatsky claimed to have

learned in a fabricated part of her life in Tibet), with significant parallels with other universalist sects like Freemasonry. It was one of the many spiritual vultures preying on the spiritually empty as the power of Christendom waned.

The Akashic Records were their idea of a cosmic repository of all reality, past, present and future. They contain every event of the universe from all past and all future. Theosophist psychics tried to "tap into" these records to attain universal and specific knowledge.

23.2 Blockchain as Akashic Record

To explain aloud Leonardo's subtle joke: blockchains, as they come to maturity, are functioning as Akashic Records of our own invention.

Bitcoin's blockchain is a necessarily public ledger of all past transactions, the origin of their funds, the wallets they interact with and more. People often erroneously think that the "crypto" in cryptocurrency means that information about it is somehow "cryptic" or hidden, but this is just ignorance.

Bitcoin is substantially worse for privacy than even the most corporate credit cards, since even then credit cards don't broadcast your transactions publicly on the internet as bitcoin must do for all submitted transactions.

As time has gone on and projects such has Ethereum have developed, blockchain technology is employing these public ledgers for an ever wide range of tasks: decentralized computing, contracting and much more…

If blockchains continue developing as they are, they will gradually record and make publicly available every transaction, action and for that matter—idle word of every human. There are projects and coins for every segment of digital life, including storing and accessing files, watching videos, interacting with the internet of things and more. A combination of greed, stupidity and

neophilia are leading us to disaster world that might not be able to be undone.

The technologization of society is accelerating for most. Less and less of human life occurs without the filter, approval and overwatch of internet-connected technology. As more of this becomes part of "the Blockchain," more of it becomes an issue of common knowledge.

A normal human reacts in fear at the idea that God the Dread Judge has a Book of Life with all actions and thoughts of all men and will judge them accordingly. A delusional theosophist might pine for the power that such knowledge would give them over others, but they needn't pine long, since this is exactly the weaponry we are creating and leaving in the open with blockchain technology…

23.3 Technology and Will-to-Power

The greatest threat to good programming, human freedom and humanity itself is the love of technology just for technology's sake.

There is no shortage of visionary programmers who can imagine niche uses for novel technology. But unfortunately for these people "Can I?" is a common question, but "Should I?" is fairly rare.

Pride and lust for power are the true motivations of many visionary programmers. It doesn't feel like "lust for power" when you experience it, but there is a very Nietzschean muscle a programmer exercises when he sees a large and exploitable dataset. When you see masses of metadata, and you know you have the means at your fingertips to create something "new" with it, the temptation is almost always too difficult to resist.

Only the most mercenary and depraved programmer sets out to write software to enslave. Still, when even a semi-competent programmer sees an interesting dataset of GPS coordinates, cell-phone metadata, Bitcoin transaction data or something else, there often arises an insatiable desire to deploy this dataset in a "clever" and "useful" way.

This is the pinnacle of the "useful idiot" phenomenon. In design alone, the technology is morally and socially inert, **but no technology is morally or socially inert in implementation**. This is even more the case when many evil actors, governments, the media, organized power weaponize "clever" and "useful" projects to actualize private and hidden goals.

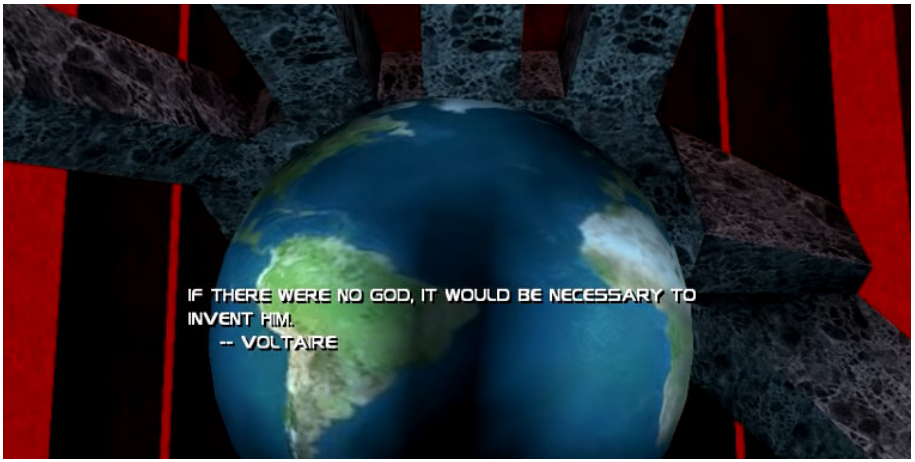
There is a deep undercurrent in modernity to have "smart" technology. Refrigerators and appliances often now connect to the internet and download software patches from their vendors. Simple finger-operated light switches have apparently been ruled passé, while voice-operated light switches that communicate with Amazon servers are the new thing.

The reason that people like Richard Stallman continue ending up sounding prophetic about the dangerous of proprietary software is because they are serious enough to realize that **programming is the closest mankind has ever come to wizardry and dark arts**. With such supreme power and with such a lack of oversight (either by writing closed-source code or otherwise), even the most noble programmer can be easily seduced into flexing their Will-to-Power to do the absurd.

23.4 The Antichrist and Digital Hyperreality

As we further encroach creating the Akashic Records by hand, this all might remind you of that one Voltaire quote…

You know, that one that millennial gamers will know from the ending of Deus Ex if you decide to merge yourself with the omniscient and omnipotent AI panopticon:



If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent him.

The zeitgeist of modernity is certainly atheistic, but at the same time, every movement in it seems to bend like pliable reeds to the desire to create a "God" of its own design.

Positivism rejects or scientifically dismisses the very metaphysical reality of "truth" and "falsity" themselves. It then encourages the assumptive jump from personal or informational subjectivity to the *denial of transcendent objectivity altogether*. Since this is an absurd crime even against logic, **we have a natural deep-seated desire to instead create a new layer of reality on which objective and undeniable truth can be restored**. This is the newly created digital realm. This is man's electronic equivalent of God's "Book of Life" which logs all truth in digital databases and blockchains.

Actual reality is messy, organic and is perceived subjectively—And mankind is only a part of that creation. But in the digital world, we can arrange our new lives with inviolable programs and smart contracts that have a new enforced objectivity.

Mankind is creator and omnipotent in this lesser reality, but our desire for power is so great that we want to elevate this lesser reality

to something greater than reality itself. Wouldn't it be nice to have the kinds of superpowers we can achieve with computer programming in our waking lives? If so, why not insert our waking consciousnesses into this reduced reality to wield this fantasy power?

Worst of all, you now have a class of Jordan Petersonian "intellects" denigrating and obfuscating reality to such a degree as to make the new digital Antichrist sounds like it was what we were talking about the whole time! God has been reduced to and confused with "the idea of God" or "the most powerful thing in creation." The mentalistic world of archetypes has become the world of digital imagination, which is now held up as a replacement for the very idea of reality beyond atoms bumping into each other. We're all theosophists! We're all Free Masons now!

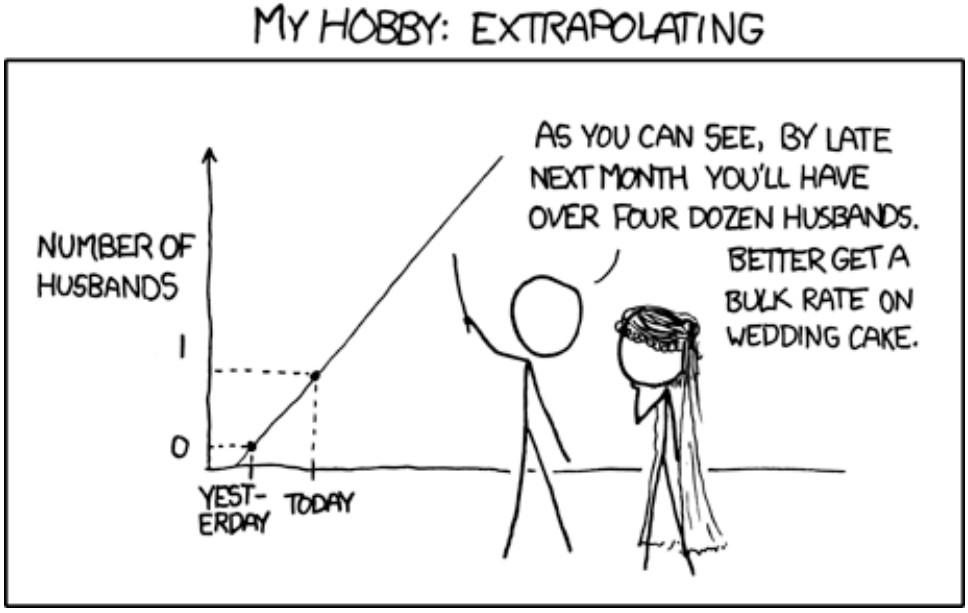
It is now held as an ideal to *create* our "Creator" and imbue digital technology with as much power and omniscience as possible. People will soon unironically call themselves religious because they worship a created techno-god because they have been duped into believing this is what "God" always meant.

Deus Ex was a dystopian video game, not an instructional manual. (Looking at you, Elon Musk.)

It's naturally common for Christians to interpret the singular final antichrist to be an individual person, but at this point, a much more obvious "beast system" to marvel at is a technological system in itself consummated in something that looks like God.

23.5 Transhumanism and Singularity as Pattern Extrapolation

This entire budding techno-futurist religion has a simple origin. The human mind sees patterns.


MY HOBBY: EXTRAPOLATING
AS YOU CAN SEE, BY LATE NEXT MONTH YOU'LL HAVE OVER FOUR DOZEN HUSBANDS.
BETTER GET A BULK RATE ON WEDDING CAKE.
NUMBER OF HUSBANDS
1
0
YEST-ERDAY
TODAY

Apologies for the use of XKSoyD.

In every moment of history, every society manages to "see patterns" by extrapolating the past presented to them, just adding on a couple extra steps (also presented to them). Do not mistake your extrapolation of recent events to be a foundational direction of the universe.

For example, John von Neumann, the most notable polymath of the 20th century took the geometric proliferation of nuclear arms and their Game Theoretics seriously—**and unironically recommended immediate nuclear war**. His obituary in *Life* (Feb 25, 1957; p. 96) says of his thinking the following:

[He] observed at that time: "With the Russians it is not a question of whether but when." A hard-boiled strategist, he was one of the few scientists to advocate for preemptive war, and in 1950 he was remarking, "If you say why not bomb them tomorrow, I say why not today? If you say today at 5 o'clock, I say why not 1 o'clock?"

Thankfully most people lacked the iron-clad logic of von Neumann and we avoided nuclear holocaust.

In our modern world, this lazy tendency of extrapolation often manifests in a kind of *Transhumanism* or belief in technological "Singularity".

This is a utopian or millenarian belief that we can eternally extrapolate geometric increases in increased technological or computational power to a point where technological improvement becomes instant, effortless, yet infinite. Technology seems to have significantly accelerated in human life, so it seems to these people that we should assume it continues to do so, apparently with the idea that there is no factor in human psychology, physiological, neuroscience or even economy that could ever be a principled boundary for this tumorous growth.

Transhumanists, as their name suggests, ultimately believe in what they might glowingly describe as humans "transcending their biology and psychology" or other cloudy terms. In reality, these people are pining for the death of humanity, or as some absurdly put it, "human civilization surviving [sic] in human-created AI."

This is actually the best case scenario of 'transhumanism.' If you think this comic is weird, wait until there are Matrix-style warehouses of pod-people hooked up to auto-masturbators. Acutally, you'll realize in some senses, they're already here.

They imagine husks of biological humanity, perfectly climate-controlled by vaccines, "augmentations," and directly-injected stimulation and entertainment, embedded in a casket of metal for their entire lives. They imagine human-created robots, then totally de-tethered from their creators, exploring the universe and installing robot colonies on distant planets. In some perverted way, they call this genocidal conquest of humanity humanity itself, or humanity "improved."

This is the Gnostic Heresy reborn, but worse than original Gnos-

tics, who at least believed in the structure beyond matter, and who consistently denigrated matter compared to it. These new Gnostics believe in creating this realm of ideas, but destroying and mutilating the human mind and body that they believe to be the very metric of value of this new realm. In a literal sense, they want to destroy nature, mankind and the universe as they know it.

23.6 Cucked by "Inevitability"

Transhumanists take a page from Marx's book in passing of their true desire as being a scientific "inevitability." They argue that singularity *will* happen, therefore, by some leap of logic, it should, or even its many consequences or birth-pangs are therefore good. This is absurd.

If, after all, an asteroid were hurdling towards this planet capable of wiping out human life, only a moron refuse to act saying that "It's inevitable," or "It's the clear direction of history." At that, the trajectory of an asteroid is an issue of math, while any alleged trajectory of history is an issue of pure fantasy.

I mention this to say that transhumanists often try to pass of their fantasies of the future as being "inevitable," when in fact, they are merely titillating ideas that appeal to their imaginations formed for years under the influence of interesting fantasy futurism in film, fiction and modern culture.

23.7 So, our state of affairs...

1. The influence of technology is at a local high point now. It has become over-encompassing enough to be reminiscent of omnipotence and omniscience.

2. In our godless age, this power naturally breeds a kind of worship from godless people. It provides not only a pseudo-divinity, but

a new arena for a new objectivity that out-classes the skepticism of post-modernity.

3. There are psychological (and material) incentives for people to continue expanding the power of this technological system, and build it new powers to monitor and control people.

4. There are utopian and millennialist sects going by various names that concoct rationalizations to expand the power of this technological system, expand its range and shield it from questioning.

I will leave for the future why I so quickly dismiss the supposed inevitability of "singularity." Perhaps in the next episode…

24 LS's Personal Library

This is a list of the books in my personal library. If you have any questions or want me to review any of them, email me (luke@lukesmith.xyz).

I haven't read every book here, nor do I own all the books I've read or like. I also don't necessarily like all the books I own.

Check out my podcast, *Not Related!* for some book reviews and other things. Books I've talked about in one way or another in the podcast will have a link to that episode.

24.1 LindyPress.net Books

Note that now I am reprinting out-of-print works at LindyPress.net. You can buy any of these books yourself if you'd like. (Most of them are pretty exclusive in that I'm the only one reprinting them.)

1. Pseudo-Aristotle – The Secret of Secrets

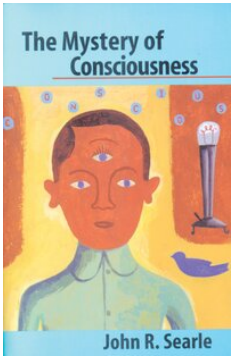
2. The Books of Enoch and Book of Jubilees

3. Isidore of Seville – Etymologiae, sive Originum Viginti Libri

4. Roger Bacon - Compendium Studii Theologiae
5. Marcus Aurelius – Meditations
6. Anti-Modernist Papal Encyclicals

(These are at the top since I don't know if anyone has given them Library of Congress numbers, and I suppose as an ad.)

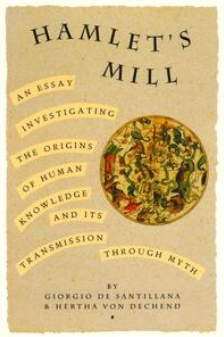
24.2 A-BD: General Works, Philosophy, Logic, Speculative Philosophy



- Bacon, Francis – *Novum Organum*
- Plotinus – *The Six Enneads*
- Grolier Incorporated – *The Encyclopedia Americana*
- Ruoff, Henry W. – *The Volume Library: A Concise, Graded Repository of Pratical and Cultural Knowledge Designed for Both Instruction and Reference*
- Clucas, Philip – *Wonders of the World*
- Gould, Rupert T. – *Enigmas*

- Gould, Rupert T. – *Oddities*
- Reader's Digest – *Strange Stories, Amazing Facts: Stories That Are Bizarre, Unusual, Odd, Astonishing, and Often Incredible*
- Hofstadter, Douglas and Dennett, Daniel – *The Mind's I*
- Ferm, Vergilius – *A History of Philosophical Systems*
- Gilson, Étienne – *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*
- Wilson, Edward O. – *Consilience*
- Plato and Aristophanes – *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito, and Aristophanes' Clouds*
- Kant, Immanuel – *Critique of Practical Reason*
- Nietzsche, Friedrich – *The Anti-Christ*
- Nietzsche, Friedrich – *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*
- Nietzsche, Friedrich – *Beyond Good and Evil*
- Nietzsche, Friedrich – *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*
- Plato – *The Dialogues of Plato*
- Aristotle – *The Basic Works of Aristotle*
- McKeon, Richard – *Introduction to Aristotle*
- Ayer, Alfred Jules – *Language, Truth & Logic*
- Epicurus – *Letters and Sayings of Epicurus*

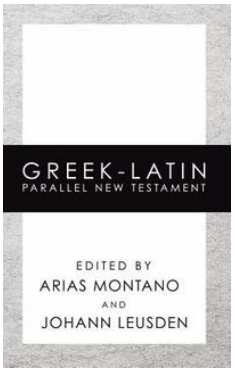
- Popper, Karl – *The Open Society and Its Enemies: Volume II: Hegel & Marx*
- Popper, Karl – *The Open Society and Its Enemies: Volume I: Plato*
- Boethius – *The Consolation of Philosophy*
- Yates, Frances A. – *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*
- Searle, John – *The Mystery of Consciousness*
- Kaufman, Walter – *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*
- Mercier, Hugo and Sperber, Dan – *The Enigma of Reason*
- Boorstin, Daniel J. – *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*
- Clark, Gordon H. – *Logic*
- Copi, Irving – *Introduction to Logic*
- Bergmann, Merrie and Moore, James and Nelson, Jack – *The Logic Book*
- Patterson, Stephen and Borg, Marcus and Crossan, John Dominic – *The Search for Jesus: Modern Scholarship Looks at the Gospels*
- Popper, Karl – *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*


HAMLET'S MILL
AN ESSAY INVESTIGATING THE ORIGINS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND ITS TRANSMISSION THROUGH MYTH
BY GIORGIO DE SANTILLANA & HERTHA VON DECHEND

- Murphy, Gardener – *Psychological Thought from Pythagoras to Freud*
- Freud, Sigmund – *Civilization and its Discontents*
- Slater, Lauren – *Opening Skinner's Box*
- Jaynes, Julian – *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicamerial Mind* NR!
- Pinker, Steven – *Blank Slate*
- Ebbinghaus, Hermann – *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*
- Bremner, John – *Mensa IQ Workout*
- Kahneman, Daniel – *Thinking, Fast and Slow* NR!
- Gigerenzer, Gerd – *Rationality for Mortals: How People Cope With Uncertainty* NR!
- Carnegie, Dale – *How to Win Friends & Influence People*
- Miller, Alan S. and Kanazawa, Satoshi – *Why Beautiful People Have More Daughters*

- Skinner, B. F – *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*
- Sugrue, Thomas – *The Story of Edgar Cayce: There Is a River*
- Kramer, Heinrich and Sprenger, James – *Malleus Maleficarum (The Hammer of the Witches)*
- Fowden, Garth – *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*
- Evola, Julius – *The Hermetic Tradition: Symbols & Teachings of the Royal Art*
- Three Initiates – *The Kybalion*
- Yates, Frances A. – *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*
- Mencken, H.L. – *Treatise on Right and Wrong*
- Rand, Ayn – *The Virtue of Selfishness*
- Harris, Sam – *Free Will*
- Bellah, Robert N. – *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*
- De Santillana, Giorgio & von Dechend, Hertha – *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and Its Transmission Through Myth*
- Frazer, James George – *The Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore*
- Hamilton, Edith – *Mythology*
- Narasimhan, Chakravarthi V. – *The Mahabharata: An English Version Based on Selected Verses*

24.3 BM-BX: Specific Religions and Theology



- Shanks, Hershel – *The Dead Sea Scrolls: After Forty Years: Symposium at the Smithsonian Institution*
- AUTHOR MISSING – *תְּהִלַּת ה' Tehillat Hashem*
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna – *The Key to Theosophy*
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna – *The Voice of Silence*
- Wright, Stuart – *Armageddon in Waco*
- Newman, John Henry – *The Grammar of Assent*
- Lewis, C. S. – *Mere Christianity*
- Lewis, C. S. – *The Screwtape Letters*
- Foxe, John – *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*
- The Voice of the Martyrs – *i am n: Inspiring Stories of Christians Facing Islamic Extremists*
- Fernández-Armesto, Felipe and Wilson, Derek – *Reformations: A Radical Interpretation of Christianity and the World*

- Luther, Martin – *Luther's Small Catechism with Additions Including the Augsburg Confession*
- Biblia Sacra Vulgata The New Oxford Annotated Bible The New English Bible Strong, James – *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*
- Illustrated Dictionary and Concordance of the Bible Breck, John – *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church*
- McDowell, Josh – *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*
- Laymon, Charles M. – *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*
- Cross, John R. – *The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus*
- Reader's Digest Mysteries of the Bible; the Enduring Questions of the Scriptures Smith, Brendan Powell – *The Brick Bible*
- Kent, Paul and McLaughlan, David – *Know Your Bible: All 66 Books Explained and Applied*
- Bailey, Lloyd R. – *Genesis, Creation, and Creationism*
- Carter, Jimmy – *Sources of Strength: Medications on Scripture for a Living Faith*
- AUTHORS MISSING - Septuagint with Apocrypha
- Jones, Clifford M. – *Old Testament Illustrations: Photographs, Maps and Diagrams*
- Reardon, Patrick Henry – *Christ in the Psalms*
- Wright, N. T. – *The Case for the Psalms: Why They Are Essential*

- Leithart, Peter J. – *Solomon Among the Postmoderns*
- Porter, J. R. – *The Lost Bible*
- AUTHORS MISSING – *The Books of Enoch and Book of Jubilees*
- Heiser, Michael – *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers and the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ*
- Montano, Arias and Leudsen, Johann – *Greek-Latin Parallel New Testament*
- AUTHOR MISSING – *Pocket Interlinear New Testament*
- The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (3 Volumes)
- AUTHOR MISSING – $K \quad \Delta$
- Kümmel, Werner Georg – *Introduction to the New Testament*
- Aland, Kurt – *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*
- Mack. Burton L. – *A Myth of Innocence*
- Witherington, Ben – *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary*
- Machen, J. Gresham – *The Origin of Paul's Religion*
- Ehrman, Bart D. – *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scriptures and the Faiths We Never Knew*
- Newman, John Henry – *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*
- Reardon, Patrick Henry – *The Jesus We Missed: The Surprising Truth about the Humanity of Christ*

- Cresswell, Peter – *The Invention of Jesus: How the Church Rewrote the New Testament*
- Ehrman, Bart D. – *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*
- Swindoll, Charles R. – *Improving Your Serve: The Art of Unselfish Living*
- Behr, John – *Formation of Christian Theology: Volume 1: The Way to Nicea*
- Behr, John – *Formation of Christian Theology: Volume 2: The Nicene Faith, Part 1*
- Behr, John – *Formation of Christian Theology: Volume 2: The Nicene Faith, Part 2*
- Pagels, Elaine – *The Gnostic Gospels*
- Robinson, James M. – *The Nag Hammadi Library*
- Dix, Gregory – *The Shape of the Liturgy*
- Platt, David – *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*
- Mother Maria Skobtsova – *Mother Maria Skobtsova: Essential Writings*
- Carman, Stephen L. and Owen, Bob – *Quest: The Story of an Aerospace Engineer who Challenged God to Prove Himself*
- Lewis, C. S. – *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*
- Ware, Timothy – *The Orthodox Church*
- Elder Cleopa – *The Truth of Our Faith: On the Tenets of Christian Orthodoxy*

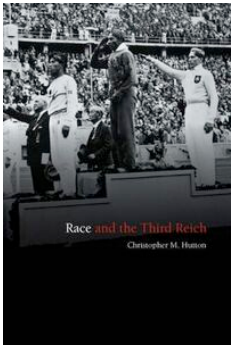
- Lossky, Vladimir – *Dogmatic Theology: Creation, God's Image in Man & the Redeeming Work of the Trinity*
- Five Great Encyclicals: Labor, Education, Marriage, Reconstructing the Social Order, Atheistic Communism
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- The Penny Catechism: A Catechism of Christian Doctrine
- Aveling, J. C. H. – *The Jesuits*
- Maritain, Jacques – *St. Thomas Aquinas*
- Burge, James – *Heloise & Abelard: A New Biography*
- The Book of Common Prayer
- The Episcopal Church – *Constitution & Canons for the Government of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Otherwise Known as the Episcopal Church Adopted in General Conventions 1789-1979*
- White, Ellen G. – *America in Prophecy*

24.4 C: Auxiliary Sciences of History

- Graeber, David and Wengrow, David – *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*
- McNeill, William H. – *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*
- Boorstin, Daniel K. – *Tje Discoverers*
- Sitchin, Zecharia – *The 12th Planet*
- Rohl, David – *The Lords of Avaris: Uncovering the Legendary Origins of Western Civilization*

- Casson, Lionel and Clairborne, Robert and Fagan, Brian and Karp, Walter – *Mysteries of the Past*
- Fisher, Marshall John and Fisher, David E. – *Mysteries of Lost Empires*
- Hawkes, Jacquetta – *The Atlas of Early Man*
- Cahill, Thomas – *Mysteries of the Middle Ages*
- Platt, Richard and Riddell, Chris – *Castle Diary*
- Pine, L. G. – *The Genealogist's Encyclopedia*
- Sowards, J. Kelley – *Makers of the Western Tradition: Portraits from History*
- Dedman, Bill – *Empty Mansions: The Mysterious Life of Huguette Clark and the Spending of a Great American Fortune*

24.5 D: World History



- Malesky, Kee – *All Facts Considered, the Essential Library of Inessential Knowledge*
- Evola, Julius – *Revolt Against the Modern World*

- Roberts, J. M. – *New History of the World*
- Cummins, Joseph – *Turn Around and Run Like Hell: Amazing Stories of Unconventional Military Strategies That Worked*
- Epstein, Steven A. – *An Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe, 1000-1500*
- Pirenne, Henri – *A History of Europe*
- Cantor, Nroman F. – *Medieval History: The Life and Death of a Civilization*
- Crowley, Roger – *Empires of the sea : the siege of Malta, the battle of Lepanto, and the contest for the center of the world*
- Mann, Charles C. – *1493, Uncovering the New World Columbus Created*
- Snyder, Louis L. – *Fifty Major Documents of the Nineteenth Century*
- Rogan, Eugene L. – *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East*
- Korda, Michael – *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia*
- Sanborn, Frederick R. – *Design for War: A Study of Secret Power Politics*
- Barbier, M. K. – *Kursk: The Greatest Tank Battle, 1943*
- Toland, John – *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945*
- Churchill, Winston – *A History of English Speaking Peoples*
- James, Lawrence – *The Rise and Fal of the British Empire*

- Gardiner, Juliet – *Who's Who in British History*
- Lunt, William E. – *History of England*
- Cheyney, Edward P. – *A Short History of England*
- Sellar, W.C. & Yeatman R.J. – *1066 and All That*
- Thomas, Charles – *Celtic Britain*
- Kelly, Amy R. – *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*
- Hibbert, Christopher – *The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age*
- Wedgwood, C. V. – *The Trial of Charles I*
- Longford, Elizabeth – *Queen Victoria: Born to Succeed*
- Freeman, John and Sharpe, Sue – *This Beautiful Land: Britain*
- National Geographic Society – *Discovering Britain and Ireland*
- Clucas, Philip – *Britain: This Beautiful Land*
- Herrior, James – *James Herrior's Yorkshire*
- Seed, Brian – *London*
- Bond, Maurice – *The Houses of Parliament: The Palace of Westminster*
- Newson, Barbara – *Look at Windsor*
- Fraser, Antonia – *Mary, Queen of Scots*
- Dahill, Thomas – *How the Irish Saved Civilization*
- Shannon, Ashley – *Irish Blessings: A Photographic Celebration*

- Tuchman, Barbara Wertheim – *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century*
- Tackett, Timothy – *When the King Took Flight*
- Kemp, Gérald van der – *Versailles: The Palace, the Park, the Trianon*
- Hutton, Christopher – *Race and the Third Reich*
- Evans, Richard J. – *The Third Reich in Power*
- Shirer, William L. – *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*
- Scheider, Theodor – *Frederick the Great*
- Desing, Julius – *Royal Castle Neuschwanstein : the king and his castle : the most important events in the life of King Ludwig II of Bavaria and his favourite Castle Neuschwanstein*
- National Geographic Book Service – *Greece and Rome: Builders of Our World*
- Martin, Thomas R. – *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*
- Cartledge, Paul – *Alexander the Great: The Hunt for a New Past*
- Mellersh, H. E. L. – *The Destruction of Knossos: The Rise and Fall of Minoan Crete*
- Staccioli, Romolo Augusto – *Ancient Rome: Past & Present*
- Tacitus, C. Cornellius – *Annales et Historiae*
- Barzini, Luigi Giorgio – *The Italians*
- Massie, Robert K. – *Peter the Great: His Life and World*
- Massie, Robert K. – *Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman*

- Payne, Robert – *The Life and Death of Lenin*
- Rappaport, Helen – *Caught in the Revolution: Witnesses to the Fall of Imperial Russia*
- Rayfield, Donald – *Stalin and His Hangmen*
- MacDonald, Kevin – *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements*
- Ford, Henry Sr. – *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*
- Ali, Tariq – *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power*
- De Bary, William Theodore – *The Sources of Indian Tradition*
- Keay, John – *India, A History*
- Van de Mieropp, Marc – *A History of the Ancient Near East*
- Ebrey, Patricia Buckley – *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*
- National Geographic Society – *Journey into China*
- *Ten Famouse Chinese Scenic Wonders*
- Burden, Matthew Currier – *The Blog of War: Front-Line Dispatches from Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan*
- Van Staaveren, Jacob – *An American in Japan, 1945-1948: A Civilian View of the Occupation*
- Haeoe Kongbogwan – *A Handbook of Korea*
- Butzer, Karl W. – *Ancient Egypt: Discovering its Splendors*
- Time-Life Books – *Australia*
- Williams, Maslyn – *The Stone Age Island: New Guinea Today*

24.6 E-F: History of the Americas

The Foxfire Book
Hog dressing, log cabin building,
mountain crafts and foods,
planting by the signs,
snake lore, hunting tales,
faith healing, moonshining,
and other affairs of plain living.

- Urdang, Laurence – *The Timetables of American History*
- Hancock, Graham – *America Before: The Key to Earth's Lost Civilization*
- Goodman, Jeffrey – *American Genesis: The American Indian and the Origins of Modern Man*
- Mann, Charles C. – *1491, New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*
- Robinson III, Charles M. – *The Plains Wars, 1757-1900*
- Time-Life Books – *The American Indians: The European Challenge*
- William Red Fox – *The Memoirs of Chief Red Fox*
- Jennings, Francis – *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744*
- Little, Gregory – *Path of Souls: The Native American Death Journey: Cygnus, Orion, the Milky Way, Giant Skeletons in Mounds, & the Smithsonian*

- Bryant, Page – *The Aquarian Guide to Native American Mythology*
- Sonnichsen, C. L. – *Geronimo and the End of the Apache Wars*
- Childs, Craig – *House of Rain: Tracking a Vanished Civilization across the American Southwest*
- Mooney, James – *Myths of the Cherokee*
- Arnold, Caroline – *The Ancient Cliff Dwellers of Mesa Verde*
- Greenblatt, Stephen – *New World Encounters*
- Reader's Digest – *Historic Places*
- Fischer, David Hackett – *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*
- Durant, John and Durant, Alice K. Rand – *The Presidents of the United States*
- Morison, Samuel Eliot – *The Oxford History of the American People*
- Miller, John J. and Molesky, Mark – *Our Oldest Enemy: A History of America's Disastrous Relationship with France*
- Rubin, Barry – *Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience and Iran*
- Sowell, Thomas – *Ethnic America*
- Hostetler, John A. – *Amish Society*
- Ellis Cose – *The Rage of a Privileged Class: Why Are Middle-Class Blacks Angry? Why Should America Care?*
- Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. – *The Age of Jackson*

- Hurmence, Belinda – *Before Freedom: 48 Oral Histories of Former North and South Carolina Slaves*
- Adams, Nehemiah – *A South-side View of Slavery: or Three Months at the South in 1854*
- Parsons, Charles Grandison – *An Inside View of Slavery; or A Tour Among the Planters*
- Long, A. L. – *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee*
- Künstler, Mort – *Jackson and Lee: Legends in Gray*
- Katcher, Philip – *Great Gambles of the Civil War*
- Henry, Robert Selph – *The Story of the Confederacy*
- Wharton, H. M. – *War Songs and Poems of the Southern Confederacy, 1861-1865: a Collection of the Most Popular and Impressive Songs and Poems of War Times, Dear to Every Southern Heart*
- Stormer, John A. – *The Death of a Nation*
- *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*
- *The Official Warren Commission Report on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy*
- Chomsky, Noam – *Interventions*
- Ramo, Joshua Cooper – *The Age of the Unthinkable*
- Howard, Howard P. – *Sacajawea*
- de las Casas, Bartolomé – *Brevisima relación de la destrución de las Indias*
- Shaw, Mary – *According to Our Ancestors: Folk Texts from Guatemala and Honduras*

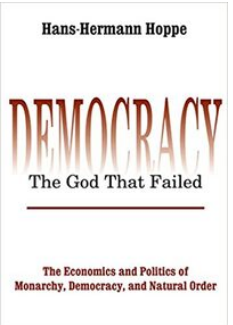
- Stoltzfus, Louise – *Amish Women: Lives and Stories*
- Whitener, Rogers – *Thrice-Told Tales*
- *The Foxfire Book*
- *The Foxfire Book 2*
- Gill, Joan E. and Read, Beth R. – *Born of the Sun*
- Edrinn, Roger – *Colorado Fourteeners: The 54 Highest Peaks*
- Garía Márquez, Gabriel – *La aventura de Miguel Littin clandestino en Chile*

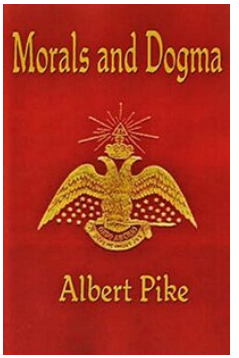
24.7 G: Geography, Anthropology, Recreation

- King, Larry – *Travel for Fun and Profit*
- Winer, Richard – *Ghost Ships: True Stories of Nautical Nightmares, Hauntings, and Disasters*
- National Geographic – *National Geographic Atlas of the World*
- National Geographic – *National Geographic Collegiate Atlas of the World*
- Haywood, John – *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Civilizations*
- *These United States: Our Nation's Geography, History, and People*
- Jenkins, Simon – *Nelson's 3-D Bible Mapbook: A Graphically Exciting New Way to Experience the Great Events and Places of the Bible*
- Wells, Spencer – *Pandora's Seed: The Unforeseen Cost of Civilization*

- Cochran, Gregory and Harpending, Henry – *the 10,000 Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution*
- Hoebel, E. Adamson – *Man in the Primitive World: An Introduction to Anthropology*
- National Geographic Society – *Peoples of the World*
- Ferdon, Edwin N. – *Early Tonga: As the Explorers Saw It 1616-1810*
- Cremo, Michael A. & Thompson, Ricahrd L. – *Forbidden Archaeology: The Hidden History of the Human Race*
- Hancock, Graham – *Magicians of the Gods: The Forgotten Wisdom of Earth's Lost Civilization*
- Cayce, Hugh Lynn – *Edgar Cayce on Atlantis*
- Marshack, Alexander – *The Roots of Civilization: The Cognitive Beginnings of Man's First Art, Symbol and Notation*
- Bord, Janet and Bord, Colin – *Prehistoric Britain from the Air*
- Bruce, Annette J. – *More Tellable Cracker Tales*
- Harden, John – *Tar Heel Ghosts*
- Manning, Russ and Jamieson, Sondra – *The Best of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: A Hiker's Guide to Trails and Attractions*
- Worth, Sylvia – *Rules of the Game: The Complete Illustrated Encyclopedia of All the Sports of the World*
- Whitman, Malcolm D. – *Tennis: Origins and Mysteries*
- Reek, Jan van – *Hypermodern Strategy*
- Brecher, Erwin – *Lateral Logic Puzzles*

24.8 H: Social Sciences





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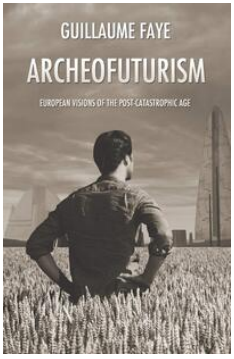
24.9 J-K: Political Science and Law



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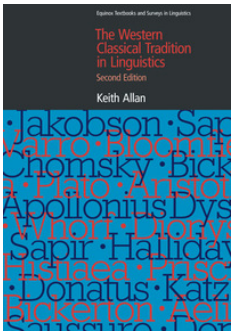
24.10 P: Philology, Linguistics



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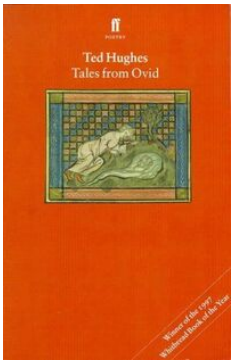
24.11 PA: Greek and Latin language and Literature



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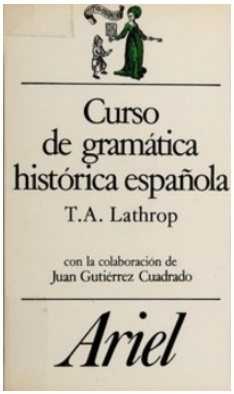
24.12 PC: Romance Languages



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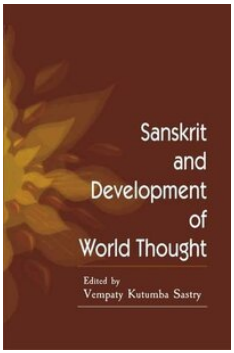
24.13 PJ-PL: Oriental, Indo-Iranian, East-Asian and Oceanian Languages



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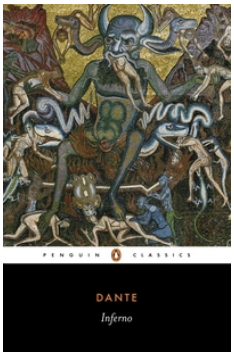
24.15 PQ: Romance Literature



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- Graves, Robert – *Claudius the God and His Wife Messalina*
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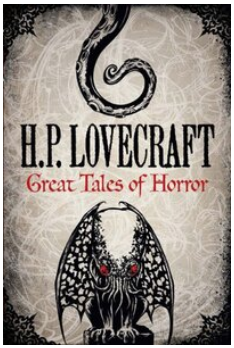
24.17 PS: American Literature



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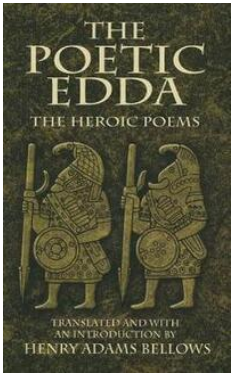
- Crichton, Michael – *Timeline*
- Dick, Philip K. – *Dr. Bloodmoney*
- Dick, Philip K. – *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*
- Herbert, Frank – *Dune*
- Jordan, Robert – *The Eye of the World*
- King, Stephen – *The Bazaar of Bad Dreams*
- Myers, Bill – *Blood of Heaven*
- Myers, Bill – *Fire of Heaven*
- Myers, Bill – *Threshold*
- Quinn, Daniel – *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit*
- Pearl, Matthew – *The Dante Club*
- Asimov, Isaac – *Before the Golden Age: A Science Fiction Anthology of the 1930's*
- Saramago, José – *Todos los nombres*

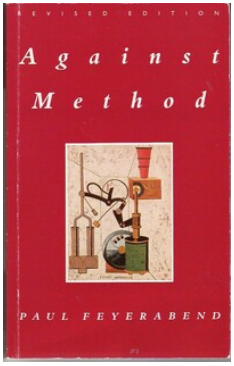
24.18 PT-PZ: Other Literature



- Hesse, Hermann – *Siddhartha*
- Hesse, Hermann – *The Glass Bead Game*
- Sturluson, Snorri – *Poetic Edda*
- Sturluson, Snorri – *Prose Edda*
- Borges, Jorge Luis – *Ficciones*
- Connor, Ralph – *Black Rock: a Tale of the Selkirks*
- Roberts, James Hall – *The Q Document*
- Kroyatin, Christopher – *The Best Ghost Stories Ever*
- Gregory, Kristiana – *The Winter of Red Snow: The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart*
- Tolkien, J. R. R. – *The Hobbit*
- Wilder, Laura Ingalls – *Little House (entire series)*
- Jacobs, Joseph – *Favorite Celtic Fairy Tales*
- Davis, Donald – *Southern Jack Tales*

- Baum, L. Frank – *The Wizard of Oz*
- The Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales
- The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales

24.19 Q: General Science



- Seb Falk – *The Light Ages: The Surprising Story of Medieval Science*
- de Santillanna, Giorgio – *The Origins of Scientific Thought: from Anazimander to Proclus, 600 B.C. to 300 A.D.*
- Stableford, Brian M. – *The Mysteries of Modern Science*
- Dietz, David – *The Story of Science*
- Gardner, Martin – *Great Essays in Science*
- Motterlini, Matteo – *For and Against Method: Including Lakatos's Lectures on Scientific Method and the Lakatos-Feyerabend Correspondence*
- Feyerabend, Paul – *Against Method*

- Kuhn, Thomas – *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
- Wiener, Norbert – *The Human Use of Human Beings*
- Taleb, Nassim Nicholas – *Antifragile*
- Taleb, Nassim Nicholas – *The Black Swan*

24.20 QA: Mathematics

- Hofstadter, Douglas – *Gödel, Escher, Bach*
- Neugebauer, Otto – *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*
- Bharati Krsna Thirthaji Maharaja – *Vedic Mathematics*
- Apollonius of Perga – *On Conic Sections*
- Elis, Robert and Gulick, Denny – *Calculus with Analytic Geometry*
- Sawyer, W. W. – *Mathematician's Delight*
- Sperling, Abraham and Stuart, Monroe – *Mathematics (Made Simple Self-Teaching Library)*
- Hutton, Graham – *Programming in Haskell*
- Birns, Peter and Brown, Patrick and Muster, John C. C. – *Unix for People*
- Kernighan, Brian W. and Ritchie, Dennis M. – *The C Programming Language*
- Barski, Conrad – *Land of Lisp*
- Raymond, Eric S. – *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*
- Emmet, E. R. – *Brain Puzzler's Delight*

- Emmet, E. R. – *Puzzles for Pleasure*
- Gardner, Martin – *aha! Gotcha, Paradoxes to puzzle and delight*
- Heafford, Philip – *The Math Entertainer*
- Bellos, Alex – *Here's Looking at Euclid*
- Nyberg, Joseph A. – *Second Course in Algebra*
- Wentworth, G. A. – *New School Algebra*
- Lial, Margaret L. and Miller, Charles D. – *Algebra and Trigonometry*
- Hart, William – *College Algebra*
- Sokal, Alan and Bricmont, Jean – *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*
- Christian, Robert R. – *Introduction to Logic and Sets*
- Davis, Morton D. – *Game Theory: A Nontechnical Introduction*
- Friedman, Avner – *Differential Games*
- Takahashi, Shin – *The Manga Guide to Statistics*
- Smith, Edward S. – *Unified Calculus*
- Horblit, Marcus and Nielson, Kaj L. – *Problems in Plane Geometry with Solutions*
- Shively, Levi S. – *Modern Geometry*
- Nelson, Alfred L. and Folley, Karl W. – *Plane and Spherical Trigonometry*
- Love, Clyde E. – *Analytic Geometry*

24.21 QB-QR: Other Sciences

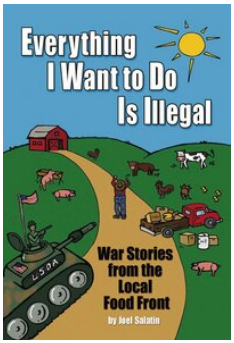
- The Cosmic Connection: An Extraterrestrial Perspective – *Sagan, Carl*
- Hawking, Stephen W. – *A Brief History of Time*
- Lerner, Eric – *The Big Bang Never Happened*
- Davies, Paul C. W. – *How to Build a Time Machine*
- McEvoy, J. P. and Zarate, Oscar – *Quantum Theory, A Graphic Guide*
- Carpenter, Sharon Maddux and Carpenter, Toni Garcia – *The Hurricane Handbook: A Practical Guide for Residents fo the Hurricane Belt*
- Booker, Christopher – *The Real Global Warming Disaster*
- Greenburg, Arthur – *From Alchemy to Chemistry in Picture and Story*
- Valentine, Basil – *Of Natural and Supernatural Things: Also, of the First Tincture, Root, and Spirit of Metals and Minerals: How the Same are Conceived, Generated, Brought Forth, Changed and Augmented*
- Pauling, Linus – *General Chemistry*
- Hirschmann, Kris – *Fossils*
- Watson, James – *The Double Helix*
- Maynard Smith, John – *The Problems of Biology*
- Shelldrake, Rupert – *Morphic Resonance*
- Shute, Evan – *Flaws in the Theory of Evolution*

- Fodor, Jerry and Piattelli Palmarini, Massimo – *What Darwin Got Wrong*
- Spalding, Volney – *Guide to the Study of Common Plants: An Introduction to Botany*
- Kadans, Joseph M. – *Modern Encyclopedia of Herbs*
- McFarland, J. Horace – *Getting Acquainted with Trees*
- Kalman, Bobbie – *The Life Cycle of a Bird*
- Gray, Henry – *Anatomy, Descriptive and Surgical (Gray's Anatomy)*
- Overton, Frank – *Applied Physiology: Including the Effect of Alcohol and Narcotics*
- Kandel, Eric R. and Schwartz, James H. and Jessell, Thomas M. – *Essentials of Neural Science and Behavior*
- Kurzweil, Ray – *The Singularity is Near*

24.22 R: Medicine

- FC&A – *The Folk Remedy Encyclopedia: Olive Oil, Vinegar, Honey and 1,001 Other Home Remedies*
- Kennedy, Robert Francis – *The Real Anthony Fauci: Bill Gates, Big Pharma, and the Global War on Democracy and Public Health*
- Fleischman, John – *Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story About Brain Science*
- Tapley, Donald F. – *Complete Home Medical Guide*
- Better Homes and Gardens Family Medical Guide
- The Encyclopedia of Common Diseases

24.23 S-T: Agriculture and Technology



- David the Good – *Totally Crazy Easy Florida Gardening*
- Mollison, Bill – *Introduction to Permaculture*
- Salatin, Joel – *Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal*
- Seymour, John – *The Complete Book of Self-Sufficiency*
- Cobleigh, Rolfe – *Handy Farm Devices and How to Make Them (2 copies)*
- Seymour, John – *Gardener's Delight*
- Seymour, John – *The Self-Sufficient Gardener*
- Bremness, Lesley – *Herbs*
- Haslam, Gillian – *The Herbal Yearbook*
- Haring, Elda – *The Seedling Handbook*
- Abraham, George – *The Green Thumb Garden Handbook*
- Reader's Digest Illustrated Guide to Gardening
- Xenophon – *The Art of Horsemanship*

- Luttmann, Rick and Luttmann, Gail – *Chickens in Your Backyard*
- Kaczynski, Theodore John – *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How*
- Kaczynski, Theodore John – *Technological Slavery*
- Macaulay, David and Ardleym Neil – *The Way Things Work*
- Slater, Robert and Li, Ling and Li, Wen – *Portraits in Silicon*
- Bishop, Michael and Zimmerman, Holmes – *Detailing Cars and Trucks*
- Allaby, Michael and Lovelock, James – *The Greening of Mars*
- Firth, Francis – *Egypt and the Holy Land: The Pioneering Photographic Expeditions to the Middle East*
- Simplicity Sewing Book
- Scrap Crafts for All Occasions
- Hébert, Francine – *Introduction to Sewing and Fabric*
- Cy DeCosse Incorporated – *Sewing Essentials*
- Cy DeCosse Incorporated – *Quick & Easy Sewing Projects*
- Newman, Jennifer – *Exquisite Embroidery*
- Young, Joan – *Miracles with the Binding Stitch*
- Dallas, Sarah – *Scottish Highland Knits*
- Abbey, Barbara – *The Complete Book of Knitting*
- Blatt, Anny – *Anny Blatt: Timeless Classics from the Knit Collection*

- Wat, Rebecca – *Knit Tricks!: Easy Shaping Techniques: 25 Stylish Projects from Simple Rectangles*
- Bliss, Debbie – *Nursery Knits: More Than 30 Designs for Clohtes, Toys and Other Items fo 0-3-year-olds*
- Lansky, Vicki – *Vinegar: Over 400 Various, Versatile and Very Good Uses You've Probably Never Thought of*
- Frank W. Cawood and Associates – *1,001 Perfectly Legal Ways to Get Exactly What You Want, When You Want It, Every Time*
- Better Homes and Gardens – *America's Best-Loved Community Recipes*
- Good, Phyllis Pellman – *Delicious Amish Recipes*
- Five Brothers Culinary Club – *The Recipes of the Five Brothers*
- Lo, Kenneth – *Chinese Regional Cooking*
- Woodward, Sarah – *The Classic Mediterraneam Cookbook*
- When You're Entertaining
- Happel, Margaret and Harrington, Elsa – *Ladies' Home Journal Handbook of Holiday Cuisine*
- Bishop, Jack – *Vegetables Every Day*
- Gas Grill Cookouts: Simple to Sensational

24.24 U: Military Science

- Blake, George – *No Other Choice*

24.25 Books as of yet unsorted

- Flame Tree Publishing – *Gothic Fantasy: Lost Worlds Short Stories*
- Lee, Christopher – *This Sceptered Isle 55 BC to 1901*
- Malice, Michael – *Dear Reader*
- McCloskey, Deirdre N. – *Economic Writing*
- Meyer, Jerome S. – *The Provocative Puzzler*
- Reed, Lawrence W. – *Great Myths of the Great Depression*
- Using HTML4, Java 1.1, and Javascript 1.2
- Valizadeh, Roosh – *Game*
- Vikernes, Varg – *MYFAROG 2.6*
- Pageau, Matthieu – *Language of Creation*
- Wright, Steven – *Weather Modification & UFO's and Other New World Order Deceptions*
- Epstein, Samuel – *Unreasonable Risk: How to Avoid Cancer from Cosmetics and Personal Care Products: The Neways Story*

End of First Section

25 March 19, 2010 » 2768 Views» By jay008 » Theology

By: Jay

A Reformed Protestant apologist recently sent me several objections to the Deuterocanonical Books. These are the books which are included in the Catholic and Orthodox canons, but were removed from Protestant Bibles, originally by Luther. As it stands, his objections are standard, with a couple new ones I had never heard (but which are easily refutable). I decided it would make a good article, since generally, reformed apologists rehash the same tired, old arguments and rely on straw men. One good example is the repeated claim that we think they are canonical because they are cited and alluded to by New Testament authors. This is not true. This is simply a response to the constant Protestant claim that they are never cited, showing it to be false.

Another good example, as will be seen below, is the claim by Protestants on the one hand that citation doesn't prove canonicity, while turning around and arguing that since Peter quotes Paul, somehow Protestants can magically have a canon without any Church or any Tradition. This contradicts the first claim that citation doesn't prove canonicity (as all agree), and begs the question, for it assumes apostolic authorship of the said Petrine text, which, like Matthew and other Gospels, cannot be known apart from Patristic Tradition. It's really quite simple.

25.1 Objection 1: the DC is not Scripture because Pope Gregory himself did not consider it canonical.

Reply: My Protestant friend writes with no citations, assuming this is so, from whatever source he derived the notion that Pope St. Gregory the Great did not accept the Deuterocanon. Anyone who has read him (and I have) knows this is completely false. In his famous Pastoral Rule, he writes:

"Hence, then, let the envious consider of how great power is charity, which makes ours without labour works of labour not our own. The envious are therefore to be told that, when they fail to keep themselves from

spite, they are being sunk into the old wickedness of the wily foe. For of him it is written, But by envy of the devil death entered into the world Wisdom 2:24."

Bk. III. 10

"Let the insincere hear what is written, He that walks in simplicity walks surely Proverbs 10:9. For indeed simplicity of conduct is an assurance of great security. Let them hear what is said by the mouth of the wise man, The holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit Wisdom 1:5. Let them hear what is again affirmed by the witness of Scripture, His communing is with the simple Proverbs 3:32."

Bk. III. 11

"Lest they should give something, however little to those on whom they ought to bestow nothing at all, let them hear what is written, Give to the good man, and receive not a sinner: do well to him that is lowly, and give not to the ungodly Sirach 12:4. And again, Set out your bread and wine on the burial of the just, but eat and drink not thereof with sinners Tobit 4:17."

Bk. III. 20

They are in no way distinguished from the other wisdom texts here.

25.2 Objection 2: The DC is not Scriptural because it contains numerous doctrines which are not in accord with the rest of Scripture.

Reply: This is precisely why the Jews excluded the LXX and the early Christians used it–because it pointed to Christ. You can read that fact in Kelly, Pelikan, F.F. Bruce, etc. Second, this begs the question, as anyone might reject a book they deemed "not in accord with the rest of Scripture." My friend wants to use the method of liberal "scholars" who reject most of what Jesus said, because "it wasn't in accord with the rest of Scripture." By what authority does he allow critical exegesis for the Deuterocanon and reject it elsewhere? No arguments are given here either, just assertions. You can't have your cake and eat it too. Furthermore, why did virtually all the

Fathers use them as canonical? Why did we have to wait until modern critical exegetes to know that they were "non-inspired"? Did God fail to guide the Church properly until Luther and his demythologizing descendants?

If my friend doubts that they were considered inspired like the other texts by virtually all the Fathers, he can see it clearly here.

25.3 Objection 3: The claim that the NT has numerous quotes from the DC does not substantiate the claim that the DC is Scripture because (1) it can be doubted as to whether these quotes are from the DC; (2) many and most of these quotes are actually from the OT, as others have done an excellent job showing; and (3) even if we granted that these were quotes from the DC in the NT, that does not make the DC Scripture, because there are numerous quotes from pagan poets and pagan writings in the NT, but no one would want to affirm that quoting pagans makes the pagan writings canonical.

Reply: My friend says all the arguments for the Deuterocanon are refutable and that he has refuted them. Not only has he never refuted them, my friend has yet to "get" the basic arguments for it. Several times he and other Protestants have responded by saying, "a New Testament citation does not make them canonical," when I never made that argument. My friend made up a straw man he easily knocked over, and later claimed it was "refuted."

Next, he just asserts, as he did in the debate, that the NT citations are not from the Deuterocanon. This is laughable. Does he not know most of the Church for the first 3 centuries used the LXX, including the Apostles? Any standard introduction on this work tells you this, and that the LXX contained the Deuterocanon. This means the Apostles are using an OT "Bible" with the Deuterocanon and this is obviously why there are so many references to DC texts.

But my friend asserts this with no scholarly backup. Baptist textual scholar Lee McDonald, in his book The Formation of the Christian Biblical

Canon, writes:

"It is most likely that these [DB] books were considered by the Jewish community holy or sacred well before the time of Christ, and that they were simply received by the early Christians as part of the sacred collection they inherited from Judaism. There is evidence that at least some non-canonical books had their origin in the land of Israel and were translated and transported from Israel to Alexandria and probably wherever Jews lived in significant numbers in the Roman Empire . The grandson of Ben Sirach [the writer of the deuteroncanonical book Ecclesiasticus]…lets us know he was translating for the Jews in Alexandria . The NT also has many allusions to some [deuterocanonical] literature found in the LXX, and the oldest Christian collections of OT scriptures contain much of that literature" (page 90).

Renowned evangelical scholar F.F. Bruce writes also of this well known point in his The Canon of Scripture:

"However much the wording of Stephen's defense in Acts 7 may owe to the narrator, the consistency with which its biblical quotations and allusions are based on is the Septuagint is true to life….As soon as the gospel was carried into the Greek speaking world, the Septuagint came into its own as the sacred text to which preachers appealed. It was used in the Greek-speaking synagogues of throughout the Roman Empire " (page 49).

Renowned Protestant patristics scholar, J.N.D. Kelly, wrote in his well-known Early Christian Doctrines:

"It should be observed that the Old Testament thus admitted as authoritative in the church was somewhat bulkier and more comprehensive than the 22 or 24 books of Hebrew Palestinian Judaism. It always included, though with varying degrees of recognition the so-called Apocrypha, or deuterocanonical books. The reason for this is that the Old Testament which passed in the first instance into the hands of Christians was not the original Hebrew version, but the Greek translation known as the Septuagint…most of the scriptural quotations found in the New Testament are based upon it rather than the Hebrew" (page 53).

The "others" mentioned did no such thing disproving me, but simply

said the DC texts were influenced by "goddess worship," relying on liberal scholars. Second, these others are not scholarly sources. The above scholars I listed undeniably are.

As mentioned above, my friend then makes the same straw man argument that no one has made. No one has claimed they are canonical, simply because they are cited. The only point of showing that they were cited (and this is probably the 5th time I've explained this) is to refute the common Protestant assertion that "they are never cited in the NT." In my article from two years ago found here, I am responding to reformed theologian Dr. Ian Paisley's claim that they are not cited. Not making an argument that citation proves canonicity, because everyone knows it doesn't.

25.4 Objection 4: But this too is problematic because several early church Christian liturgies used non-canonical writings admitted as non-canonical on all sides, such as the Shepherd of Hermas, etc.

Reply: Once again, this is a straw man I have had to explain numerous times to Protestants. He wants the formation of the canon to be some simple issue that is somehow directly beamed by the Holy Spirit into his head, as if it was not a long, complicated process in the early Church. No one has made the argument that liturgy definitively "proves" canonicity, but rather that it was involved in the process. This is admitted by Bishop Wescott and F.F. Bruce, as well as many other scholars, in reference to the pericopes, or liturgical collections of Bible readings for services. Protestants act like if they can show that one of the elements involved was not the ultimate factor, they have disproven the entire DC. Nope: It was part of the process, not the be all, end all.

F.F. Bruce writes in his classic The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? As follows:

"Another very important class of witnesses to the text of the New Testament are the Ancient Versions in other languages, the oldest of which is the

Old Syriac and the Old Latin, go back to the latter half of the second century. Valuable help can also be derived from early Church Lectionaries." (pg. 19)

St. Irenaeus noted:

"2. But, again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth. For [they maintain] that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Saviour; and that not the apostles alone, but even the Lord Himself, spoke as at one time from the Demiurge, at another from the intermediate place, and yet again from the Pleroma, but that they themselves, indubitably, unsulliedly, and purely, have knowledge of the hidden mystery: this is, indeed, to blaspheme their Creator after a most impudent manner! It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition." (Citation)

As I wrote in an earlier article:

"The knowledge of Apostolic Authorship is not and cannot be derived from many of the Gospels and texts themselves. Instead, for Matthean authorship, almost all turn to the following Tradition in Eusebius:

"1. There are extant five books of Papias, which bear the title Expositions of Oracles of the Lord. Irenæus makes mention of these as the only works written by him, in the following words: "These things are attested by Papias, an ancient man who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, in his fourth book. For five books have been written by him." These are the words of Irenæus.

2. But Papias himself in the preface to his discourses by no means declares that he was himself a hearer and eye-witness of the holy apostles, but he shows by the words which he uses that he received the doctrines of the faith from those who were their friends.

3. He says: "But I shall not hesitate also to put down for you along with

my interpretations whatsoever things I have at any time learned carefully from the elders and carefully remembered, guaranteeing their truth. For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those that speak much, but in those that teach the truth; not in those that relate strange commandments, but in those that deliver the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and springing from the truth itself.

4. If, then, any one came, who had been a follower of the elders, I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders—what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice." (Bk. III, Chpt. 39)

Anglican Scholar, Bishop Westcott (of the Westcott-Hort Text fame), in his older, The New Testament Canon:

"Words and rites [Liturgy] thus possess a weight and authority quite distinct from the casual references or deliberate judgments of individuals, so far as they convey the judgment of the many….It will be reasonable to conclude that the coincidence [of Scripture and Liturgy] implies a common source: that the written books and the traditional words equally represent the general sum of essential Apostolic teaching: and in proportion as the correspondences are more subtle and intricate, this proof of the authenticity of our books will be more convincing." (pg. 13)

25.5 Objection 5: The early Jews never considered the DC as canonical. It is true that many of the early Fathers dismissed this because they considered what the Church thought more important. But it begs the question as to what the church thought. There was not a consensus

Reply: Diaspora Jews did consider them canonical. I showed this from Protestant scholars in my article of two years ago. My friend again just asserts this, with no reference. Who are the "early Jews" anyway? The Apostles were early Jews and they used a Bible that included them. The Church certainly thought they were canonical, so what authority do Palestinian Jews have? Next, on what basis does Josh know that we should listen to Palestinian Jews? Does the Bible say anywhere that we are to listen to Palestinian Jews for the canon? No, he arbitrarily asserts it. If he doesn't want to go to the Church for the canon, where does he propose we go? Christ-rejecting Jews? Notice what he writes above: "they considered what the Church thought more important." This is amusing and quite telling as to how historical Protestants really are.

25.6 Objection 6: The argument that, "The Church gave you the canon, including the DC," begs the question: which Church? Eastern Orthodox? Rome? Both assume they are the one true church. They constantly commit this fallacy.

Reply: Both of those historic groups agree on the DC being canonical. This is an obvious testimony of all of history against you. It does not beg the question when we examine the other issue of the nature of the Church in the Fathers. We can see there that its Catholic.

The fact that two churches claim to be the true church doesn't refute the DC anymore than competing Protestant Churches "disprove" the books you accept.

25.7 Objection 7: We do not need a council to ratify Scripture because Peter himself considered Paul's writings as canonical before a council said so.Objection continued: This is precisely our argument as Protestants: the Church recognizes through the Holy Spirit those books which are Holy Scripture. The Church always held the DC in doubt; the Hebrew Christians never considered the DC Scripture."

This was Bahnsen's laughable response to Matatics. What Church, my friend? The Church from history, or the one that is in your head? The Church in history has recognized them. Your new, 16th century church did not. Thus, any appeal to history by you is impossible, as you are not connected with them in any way. In fact, you just said above: "they [the Fathers] considered what the Church thought more important." So, you admit you are not connected with the Fathers, and that they were wrong for not following Christ-rejecting Jews who hated the Deuterocanonical books, yet now, you would have us follow some mysterious Church from history? You are confused.

On what grounds do you show us that "Hebrew Christians" tell us what canon we use? It's your arbitrary assertion, and it's false to boot. Who does you think used the LXX, if not Christians and diaspora Jews? The Church did not hold it in doubt as you assume, but then again, you are not connected with the Church.

What do renowned Protestant scholars think?

MacDonald:

There is evidence that at least some non-canonical books had their origin in the land of Israel and were translated and transported from Israel to Alexandria and probably wherever Jews lived in significant numbers in the Roman Empire . The grandson of Ben Sirach [the writer of the deuteroncanonical book Ecclesiasticus]…lets us know he was translating for the Jews in Alexandria . The NT also has many allusions to some [deuterocanonical] literature found in the LXX, and the oldest Christian collections of OT scriptures contain much of that literature" (page 90).

The Protestant Fausset's Bible Dictionary, under "Apocrypha" states:

Apocrypha= "…the writings added in the LXX, I and II Esdra, Tobit, Judith, the sequel to Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Song of the Three Children, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon…" (page 42)

25.8 Objection 8: The DC was never officially considered Scripture by Rome until Trent, although Carthage did mention it, but not fully or finally.

"It has been said: Now indeed we must treat of the divine Scriptures, what the universal Catholic Church accepts and what she ought to shun.

The order of the Old Testament begins here:Genesis one book, Exodus one book, Leviticus one book, Numbers one book, Deuteronomy one book, Joshua Nave one book, judges one book, Ruth one book, Kings four books, Paralipomenon two books, Psalms one book, Solomon three books, Proverbs one book, Ecclesiastes one book, Canticle of Canticles one book, likewise Wisdom one book, Ecclesiasticus one book.

Likewise the order of the Prophets. Isaias one book, Jeremias one book, with Ginoth, that is, with his lamentations, Ezechiel one book, Daniel one book, Osee one book, Micheas one book, Joel one book, Abdias one book, Jonas one book, Nahum one book, Habacuc one book, Sophonias one book, Aggeus one book, Zacharias one book, Malachias one book.

Likewise the order of the histories. Job one book, Tobias one book, Esdras two books, Esther."

And this is reaffirmed by Pope St. Gelasius in Denzinger 162:

"Denzinger 162: An enumeration of the canonical books similar to that, which we haveplaced under DAMASUS[n. 84] is accustomed in certain codices to be set before the special Decree of GELASIUS. Nevertheless among others it is no longer read in this place.Of John

the Apostle one epistle, of the other John the priest two epistles, but, of the Apostle John three epistles [cf. n. 84,92, 96].”

http://www.catecheticsonline.com/SourcesofDogma2.phpObjectin 9: Even the name “deutero-canon” itself declares that they are “secondary canon”, which is to say not useful for establishing doctrine. But how is this consistent with 2 Tim 3:16: “All Scripture is profitable for doctrine”?

This is something you have imagined. The title of the deuterocanon is not a title of lesser-inspiration, anymore than “Deutero-nomy” is a title of lesser inspiration. And your claim that it does not establish doctrine begs the question, since if it is Scripture, it can establish doctrine. The Fathers cite them frequently to prove doctrine.

As for the “secondary canon,” it wouldn’t matter anyway, if you were right, since St. Paul himself distinguishes levels of importance in even his own writings:

1 Cor. 7:12: “But to the rest say I, not the Lord: If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her.”

St. Paul clearly says this is his view showing a distinction even in his own writings. Would we conclude from this that chapter 7 of Corinthians is not “inspired” on your line of reasoning?

Reply: Yet another manifest error. Clealry my friend has no familiarity with the subject, other than one-liners garnered from some reformed website. We read in Denzinger, under Pope St. Damasus I (no. 84):

This is also amusing. The question is, how do you know that St. Peter wrote that–that it's authentic? How do you know Matthew the disciple wrote Matthew's Gospel? You don't, apart from patristic tradition, as Dr. Craig Blomberg and the Reformation Study Bible admit. The fact that one *canonical* text cites another canonical text does not prove canonicity. Remember that you already argued that! Now turn it around on yourself. .

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By: Jay Dyer

A strange title for an article, indeed, but they told us in high school to make your opening line catchy, so hopefully that will bring sweat to the brow of some Calvinist. It's quite surprising to see that many biblical theologians refuse to admit the existence of the angelic realm, given that it's so prominent in Sacred Scripture, both in the New and Old Testaments. But this is to be expected since higher criticism is the norm. We will examine below the prominence in Scripture of both sides of the angelic: the holy and the demonic, and see from many scholars of various Christian traditions that the correct biblical and historical view of the hierarchies is quite a diverse realm.

I hope for this to be eye opening to many Protestants who for whatever reasons have failed to understand the biblical and historical case for this legitimate area of theology. I know from my own experience that Calvinist circles tend to be completely unaware in practice, at least, of the influence and action of secondary angelic agents, such as angels or demons. This is because Calvinism thrusts all of its theological focus on the divine will, and usually upon the immediate causality of the divine will, even if mediate, secondary causes are professed intellectually. For proof of this, I

challenge the reader to name one Calvinistic exorcist. Case closed. Thus we find this to be an area of radical difference in both Orthodoxy and traditional Catholic teaching when compared with Protestant theology, even of its more conservative stripes. It's also very telling to me that it's generally the Churches with Apostolic Succession that actually do exorcisms.

Upon exploring Liturgical worship in the Eastern and the Latin Rites, one very prominent is that of the angelic participation in the Liturgy. This arises from the St. Paul's conception of the Church on earth as one with the Church in heaven (Col. 1:13-20, Eph. 1: 21-23, 2:6, 3:10, Heb. 12:22-23). Protestantism rarely places these key texts in their proper liturgical context, and thereby loses sight of the fact that the worship on earth should be quite colorful and engage the entire man, both mentally and bodily, as St. John describes the liturgical worship in heaven in the Apocalypse.

St. Paul makes this connection clear when he charges St. Timothy before the "elect angels" (1 Tim. 5:21) to do nothing with partiality, all within the context of a liturgically-focused section. This is because, as Fr. Casmir Kucharek writes in his The Byzantine-Slav Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom:

Phrases like…"that I may stand blamelessly before your dread altar" are not verbalisms, but authentic Byzantine tradition, to be taken quite literally. Even angelic purity is demanded of one offering the sacrifice:

When the priest calls upon the Holy Spirit and offers the tremendous sacrifice, tell me what rank should we place Him? What purity shall we require of him, what reverence? Then reflect how those hands should be constituted which perform such services! What should that tongue be that pronounces such words…? At this moment the very angels encompass the priest, and the whole choir of heavenly powers lend their presence, and take up the entire space around the holy altar, to honor Him who lies thereon in sacrifice…(St. John Chrysostom, De Sacerdot. 6:4).

The same truth is also evident in the Byzantine Liturgy's Great Entrance prayer, where the Lord is escorted by the angelic powers. In the traditional Latin Mass, the same truth is taught in the Incensing of the Offering,

where the faithful pray "Through the intercession of blessed St. Michael the Archangel who stands at the right hand of the altar of incense…" and later in the Sanctus, which corresponds to the Eastern Trisagion, where the believer says:

It is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty and everlasting God, through Christ our Lord. Through whom the angels praise thy majesty, the dominions worship it, the powers stand in awe. The heavens, and the heavenly hosts and the blessed seraphim join together in celebrating their joy. With whom we pray Thee join our voices also, while we say with lowly praise, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest…" (New Saint Andrew Missal, pg. 969-70)

As Fr. Kucharek notes:

To define this presence [of the icons in the Liturgy] would be as difficult as explaining the Shekinah or the mysterious presence of Christ amid two or three gathered together in His name (Mt. 18:20). Yet such as presence was no less true. The mystical teaching concerning icons stems from the master idea of all Eastern typology, the idea of the church building as "heaven on earth." St. Gregory of Nyssa was probably the first to set out the ideas of such teaching [in his Life of Moses]. His doctrine was taken up and developed by others. The author of the Eighth century Rerum ecclesiaticarum contemplation, for example, expresses it boldly: "The heaven wherein the Triune God lives and moves on earth is the Christian Holy Place, the church…" The presence of heaven passed easily from church to icon." (ibid., 229)

The same truths are repeated and emphasized several times in the ancient Liturgy of St. Mark. Also good reading on this matter is St. Germanus of Constantinople's On the Divine Liturgy. And so we see the preeminence of the angelic participation with us in the liturgy.

But since Scripture and Tradition are quite clear that there are also fallen angelic beings that come from the original hierarchy, we can deduce that

the ranks mentioned several times by St. Paul also have their "regional" powers. We learn this from St. Daniel, where St. Gabriel the Archangel visits in answer to prayer with news concerning the "princes" of Greece and Persia (9:21, 10:13-20) with whom Gabriel battled, needing the assistance of St. Michael (verse 20). Clearly no mere human being could withstand the might of an Archangel, but we mustn't exclude the notion of a human factor to the appellation "prince." Furthermore, St. Michael is called "prince" with the same Hebrew word (sar) as the "princes" of Greece and Persia, and undoubtedly Michael is no mere human prince.

What we find is what we find elsewhere in Scripture and Tradition, that both are being spoken of: the angelic entity, along with the human being under its relative dominion. This is evidenced elsewhere in Scripture, for example, in the lengthy description of Lucifer's fall from Eden and the fall of the King of Tyre and Sidon (Ez. 28). There we see some texts applying primarily to Lucifer and others to the King of Tyre. We are also told in Daniel 4:17 that the sentence against Nebuchadneezer's pride was by the "decree of the watchers," who are clearly identified in chapter 10 as the Archangels, showing us that they rule human affairs as secondary agents under God and by His sovereign decree. So says David in Ps. 103:20-22, where the idea is the same as in Daniel. What's the point? All of this is still true today, literally true, and modern, doubtful "scholars" are flat out wrong. In this they echo Nebuchadneezer in thinking they rule, and not God and His hosts.

So we see the Old Testament giving us clues concerning the angelic hierarchies that the New Testament expands upon, yet still leaves largely veiled. One thinks also of the facts derived from the Deuterocanonical Tobit, where St. Raphael defeats the demon that plagued Sarah. Thus, the "princes" mentioned are the equivalent of the "principalities" of St. Paul.

The Eastern Trisagion and Latin Sanctus comes, of course, from the Sixth chapter of Isaiah. What I find intriguing here is what renowned Calvinist scholar E.J Young wrote in his well-known commentary on Isaiah:

"The continuous occupation of the seraphim is the blessed work of praising God. They are engaged in the unbroken task of chanting His praises. We are not told how many seraphs there were….It is probably safe to assume that the singing was antiphonal, for the seraphs cry out to the other seraphs, as though proclaiming to them and declaring to them that the Lord is holy. That the chanting was actually antiphonal, cannot, of course, be proved.

In his footnote, he expands: After a part. the perf. with waw cons. has frequentive force, "and each kept crying." On the basis of an appeal to Is. 40:3 and the usage of Ar. qara, Engell asserts that the verb has the proximate specially cultic meaning 'recite, intone.' In Egypt, the high priest, addressing the enthroned Pharoah, proclaimed, 'Pure, pure is the king of the south and the north, they purity is the purity of Horus, of Set, of Thoth and of Sepu." (Young, The Book of Isaiah Vol. I, 241).

In other words, it's liturgical, and the liturgical tradition of both the East and the West has captured this truth beautifully. And we have a top-notch Protestant scholar who opposed liturgy admitting to the principle of all liturgical worship—that its authoritative basis is the liturgical worship of heaven itself.

But back to the principalities and powers. In St. Paul, we read that Christ is seated in His human nature above all "principality and power and dominion" (Eph. 1:21). Protestant commentator Albert Barnes explains:

The word rendered here "principality"—arche in Gr.—means perperly, the beginning, and then the first place power, dominion, pre-eminence, magistrate, etc. It may refer to any rank and power, whether among men or angels, and the sense is that Christ is exalted above all….in "the world that is to come," as well as this world, it is clear that there is a reference to the angelic ranks and probably means to allude to the prevailing opinion among the Jews that the angels are of different orders. Some of the Jewish Rabbis reckon four, some ten and presume to give names…The Scripture hint in several places at a difference of rank, but the writers do not go into much detail. (Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, pg. 33).

If they are arche, they are not mere human agents, though again they are not excluded, since as non-believers, they are under the dominion of the devil (Acts 26:18). St. Paul is even clearer in Ephesians 6:12 when he writes "for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places." It's amazing that many conservative scholars will refuse to admit the other similar Pauline texts as referring to fallen angelic orders when he explains here what he means by using these terms. N.T. Wright states:

As to their referent, in our modern age it has often been taken for granted that Paul's language about supernatural power-structures needs to be demythologized, to be turned into language about, say, international power politics or economic 'structures.' This is quite legitimate, since for Paul, spiritual and earthly rulers were not sharply distinguished. In his view, earthly rulers held authority (in the sense intended by Jn. 19:11, Rom. 13:1-7) only as a trust from the Creator. At the same time, we should not ignore the supernatural or demonic element in these powers. For Paul, the powers were unseen forces working through pagan religion, astrology or magic, or through the oppressive systems that enslaved tyrannized human beings. (Wright, Colossians and Philemon, 72).

In fact, in his footnote, Wright even states that the "background belief" to this idea is expressed in the later work of Ps. Dionysius, The Celestial Hierarchy!—a work which I (Jay) highly recommend.

As a supplemental testimony, famed Anglican scholar J.B. Lightfoot who, while being somewhat skeptical, admits:

"Some commentators have referred the terms used here solely to earthly potentates and dignities. There can be little doubt however that their chief and primary reference is to the orders of the celestial hierarchy, as conceived of by these Gnostic Judaizers" (St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, pg. 152).

Lightfoot goes on to mention several Fathers and their well-known rankings of angelic hierarchy.

But what does any of this have to do with Lillith? First of all, let me say that I am not talking about that ridiculous tale of Adam's supposed first wife. Rather, Lillith appears in Scripture in one place as a feminine demon. The point is that there is much more to the world of the angelic than many are aware, and even Scripture gives us a bigger picture than many theologians recognize or are willing to admit.

We read in Isaiah 34:14 of the desolation of Edom as follows:

"Desert creatures will meet with hyenas, and wild goats (sa'ir) will bleat to each other; there the night creature (Lillith) will also repose and find for themselves places to rest." (NIV)

The KJV even reads: "The wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry unto his fellow; the screech owl (Lillith) also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest."

The liberal Oxford Annotated RSV reads, "And wild beasts will meet with hyenas, the satyr shall cry to his fellow; yea, there shall the night hag alight, and find for herself a resting place," commenting in the notes, "Night hag, the storm demon Lillith found in abandoned places…"

The Protestant Archaeological Study Bible says of this passage, "Throughout the Near East wild goats were traditionally associated with demons, as 'goat-demons' and 'satyrs'" (pg. 1116). That's because the Hebrew word sa'ir means satyr or goat-demon, and in the King James it is even rendered satyr, which is a goat demon or faun. Think Mr. Tumnus. The same wording is used in Isaiah 13:21, where we read of the desolation of Babylon as a place for the goat-demons, the sa'ir, to romp, along with other unclean animals which often signify demonic beings in the Old Testament. We know more of these satyrs from Leviticus 17:7, where God says the Israelites will "no more offer their sons to sa'ir," and in the time of Jeroboam, when he "appointed for himself priests for the high places for the goat demons and the calf-idols" (2 Chron. 11:15). Now some incredulous commentators would like to pretend that the Leviticus text applies only to actual idols, but here the text is clear that it's both. Further, we are told in the Song of Moses that these are demons (Dt. 32:17) as well as in St. Paul (1 Cor.

10:19-20).

Even more interesting is the second half of Is. 34:14, where we read that Lillith will find a place to rest. E.J. Young exegetes this text as follows:

"Using language in part taken from chapter 13, Isaiah continues his description of the desolation. In place of once festal gatherings there will be meetings of another kind. The wild animals of the desert will then meet one another. They will be the only inhabitants of the once glorious kingdom of Edom. Borrowing again from the 13 chapter, the prophet states that demons in goat form (sa'ir) will call to one another. The desolation of Babylon will overcome Edom also. There also, in just that place, so suited to the presence of the powers of darkness, is the Lillith; there she has taken her rest and found a place of repose. In Assyrian and Babylonian mythology Lilitu appears as a feminine night demon (see also Tobit 8:3). The thought here seems to be similar to that expressed in Matthew 12:43. Lillith is a demon that wanders about through the desert places. In itself, the word simply means "nocturnal." Alexander thinks the mention of a demon is out of place here in a list of animals. In answer, however, it is probable that the sa'ir actually does refer to a demon in goat form." (The Book of Isaiah Vol. II, pg. 441).

Thus, we see that there is often more than meets the eye in Scripture and often the best and brightest of the Protestants are forced to admit many of the elements they castigate in both Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Scripture lays out many more examples of liturgical patterns (especially the Apocalypse) which I have not touched on. We know that angels relate directly to these liturgical actions and participate in them. We know that they exist in a graded hierarchy, and that the same grading occurs in their fallen opposites. We see, then, from this cursory examination, that Protestantism, and especially Calvinism, is quite devoid of a proper understanding of the interaction of the angelic world with the human, though E.J. Young admits it. So, why aren't those bible-believing Calvinistic exorcists talking about liturgy and Lillith? They're in the Bible. Perhaps it's because Calvinism is problematic.

27 A Material Civilization (RG)

From all that has been said so far it already seems to follow clearly that those Orientals who reproach modern Western civilization with being a purely material one are fully justified; it is certainly in this direction exclusively that its development has taken place, and from whatever point of view one may look at it, one is always faced with the more or less direct consequences of this materialization. Nevertheless, there still remains something to add to what we have said on the subject and in the first place it is necessary to explain the different ways in which a word like "materialism" can be understood: if we use it to describe the contemporary world, various people, who do not believe themselves to be materialists at all while at the same time claiming to be modern in their outlook, will not fail to protest in the belief that this is sheer calumny; some further explanation therefore is required in order to forestall any ambiguity which might arise on the subject.

It is a significant fact that the word "materialism" itself dates back only as far as the eighteenth century; it was invented by the philosopher Berkeley, who used it to denote any theory admitting the real existence of matter; it is hardly necessary to say that it is not this use of the word which concerns us here, the question of the existence of matter not being in dispute. Soon afterwards the same word took on a more restricted meaning, which it has retained ever since: it came to denote a conception according to which nothing exists at all except matter and its derivatives; and it is important to emphasize the novelty of such a conception and the fact that it is essentially a product of the modern outlook, corresponding therefore at least to a part of its inherent tendencies. But it is above all in a different and much wider, though at the same time quite definite sense that we propose to speak of "materialism" in the present chapter; the word is here taken as referring to an entire mental outlook, of which the conception we have just described amounts to no more than one manifestation among many others, being in itself independent of any philosophical theory. This

mental outlook is one which consists in more or less consciously giving preponderance to things belonging to the material order and to preoccupations relating thereto, whether these preoccupations still retain a certain speculative appearance or whether they remain purely practical ones; and it cannot be seriously denied that this is, in fact, the mental attitude of the great majority of our contemporaries.

The whole of the "profane" science which has been developed during the course of recent centuries is confined to the study of the sensible world: its horizon is bounded exclusively by that world and its methods apply within that sphere only; but these methods have been proclaimed "scientific" to the exclusion of all others, an attitude which amounts to repudiating the existence of any science not dealing with material things. Among those who think thus, and even among those who have devoted their lives especially to the sciences in question, there are however many who would refuse to call themselves "materialists" or to accept the philosophical theory which bears that name; there are even some who readily profess a religious faith, the sincerity of which is beyond question; yet their scientific outlook does not differ appreciably from that of avowed materialists. From the religious point of view it has often been debated whether modern science ought to be denounced as atheistical or as materialistic, but this question, more often than not, has been wrongly framed; it is quite apparent that such a science does not deliberately profess either atheism or materialism, and that it is content to ignore certain things as a result of its preconceptions, though without formally denying them as this or that philosopher might do; in connection with modern science, therefore, one can only speak of a *de facto* materialism, or of what we would willingly term a practical materialism; but the evil is then perhaps all the more serious in that it penetrates deeper and is more widely diffused.

A philosophical attitude can be something quite superficial, even among "professional" philosophers; furthermore, there are certain mentalities which shrink from an actual negation, but which can accommodate themselves to an attitude of complete indifference; and this is the most dangerous atti-

tude of all, since in order to deny something it is still necessary to think about it to some extent, however slightly, whereas an attitude of indifference makes it possible to avoid giving any thought to it whatsoever. When an exclusively material science sets itself up as the only possible science and when men have got into the habit of accepting as an unquestionable truth the doctrine that no valid knowledge can exist apart from it, and when all the education which is imparted to them tends to inculcate the "superstition" of that science (or "scientism" as it should then be termed), how can such men fail to be anything but materialists in practice, or in other words, how can they fail to have all their preoccupations turned in the direction of matter?

It seems that nothing exists for modern man other than what can be seen and touched; or at least, even if they admit theoretically that something else may exist they hasten to declare it not merely unknown but "unknowable," which absolves them from having to give it further thought. If nevertheless some persons still are to be found who try to form some kind of idea of an "other world," relying as they do on nothing but their imagination they picture it in the likeness of the terrestrial world and transfer to it all the conditions belonging to that world, including space and time and even a sort of "corporeality"; in speaking elsewhere of spiritualistic conceptions we have given some very striking examples of this kind of grossly materialized representation; but if the beliefs there referred to represent an extreme case in which this particular feature is exaggerated to the point of caricature, it would be a mistake to suppose that spiritualism and the sects more or less akin to it retain the monopoly of this kind of thing. Indeed, in a more general way, the intrusion of the imagination into realms where it can yield no useful results, and which ought normally to remain closed to it, is a fact which in itself shows very clearly how incapable modern Westerners have become of raising themselves above the realm of the senses; there are many who do not know how to distinguish between "conceiving" and "imagining," and some philosophers, such as Kant, go so far as to declare "inconceivable" and "unthinkable" everything that is not capa-

ble of representation. In the same way everything that goes by the name of "spiritualism" or "idealism" usually amounts to no more than a sort of transposed materialism; this applies not only to what we have described as "neo-spiritualism," but also to philosophical spiritualism, although the latter considers itself to be the very opposite of materialism. The fact is that spiritualism and materialism, in the philosophical sense of these expressions, have no significance apart from one another: they are simply two halves of the Cartesian dualism, whose radical separation has been turned into a kind of antagonism; and, since then, the whole of philosophy has oscillated between these two terms without being able to pass beyond them. Spiritualism, in spite of its name, has nothing to do with spirituality; its conflict with materialism can be of no interest to those who place themselves at a higher standpoint and who see that these opposites are fundamentally very near to being equivalent, their supposed opposition reducing itself, on many points, to a merely verbal disagreement.

The moderns, generally speaking, cannot conceive of any other science except that which deals with things that can be measured, counted, or weighed, material things that is to say, since it is to these alone that the quantitative point of view is applicable; and the claim to reduce quality to quantity is most characteristic of modern science. In this direction the stage has been reached even of supposing that there can be no science at all, in the real sense of the word, except where it is possible to introduce measurement, and that there can be no scientific laws except those which express quantitative relations; Descartes' "mechanism" marked the birth of this ten@ency, which has grown more and more pronounced ever since, the rejection of Cartesian physics notwithstanding, for it is not a tendency connected with any particular theory but with an altogether general conception of scientific knowledge. Nowadays people try to apply measurement even in the field of psychology, which lies beyond its reach from its very nature; they end by ceasing to understand that the possibility of measurement rests solely upon a property inherent in matter, namely its indefinite divisibility, unless indeed it be supposed that the same property is to be found in every-

thing that exists, which amounts to materializing everything. As we have already remarked, it is matter which is the principle of division and pure multiplicity; the predominance attributed to the quantitative point of view, and extended, as we have already shown, to the social domain, does therefore indeed constitute materialism in the sense mentioned above, although it need not necessarily be connected with philosophical materialism, which, as a matter of fact, it preceded historically in the course of development of the tendencies inherent in the modern outlook. We will not dwell upon the error of seeking to reduce quality to quantity or upon the inadequacy of all those attempts at explanation conforming more or less to the mechanistic type; that is not our present purpose and we will only remark, in this connection, that even within the sensible order a science of this type has but little connection with reality, of which the greater part must necessarily lie outside its scope.

While speaking of "reality" another fact should be mentioned, which might easily be overlooked by many, but which is very significant as a sign of the mentality we are describing: we refer to the habit of using the word "reality" exclusively to denote reality belonging to the sensible order. As language is the expression of the mentality of a people or of a period, one must conclude from this that for those who speak in this manner everything that cannot be grasped by the senses is illusory and even totally non-existent; it is possible that they are not fully conscious of the fact, but this negative conviction is none the less the underlying one, and if they assert the contrary one may be sure that this assertion is only the expression of some much more superficial element in their mentality, although they happen not to be conscious of the fact, and that their protest may even be a purely verbal one. If this should seem to be an exaggeration one has only to try and ascertain, for example, what the supposed religious convictions of a great many people amount to; a few notions learnt by heart in a purely academic and mechanical way without any real assimilation, notions to which they have never given any serious consideration, but which they retain in their memory and repeat on occasion because they form part of a certain

formal and conventional attitude, which is all they are able to understand by the word religion. We have already referred to this "minimizing" of religion, of which the "verbalism" we mentioned represents one of the latest phases: it is this which explains why many so-called "believers" in no wise fall short of the "unbelievers" in the matter of practical materialism; we shall return to this question later, but first we must conclude our investigation of the materialistic nature of modern science, since this is a subject that requires to be treated from various angles.

Attention must once again be drawn to a point that has been mentioned earlier; the modern sciences do not possess the character of disinterested knowledge, nor does their speculative value, even for those who believe in it, amount to much more than a mask behind which purely practical considerations lie concealed, one which makes it possible nevertheless to retain the illusion of a false intellectuality. Descartes himself, in working out his physics, was already primarily concerned with extracting from it a system of mechanics, medicine, and morality, and a still greater change came with the spread of the Anglo-Saxon empiricism; moreover, the prestige of science in the eyes of the general public rests almost solely upon the practical results it makes attainable because, here again, it is a question of things that can be seen and touched. We have said that pragmatism represents the final outcome of all the modern philosophy and marks the lowest stage in its decline; but outside the philosophical field there also exists, and has already existed for a long time, a diffused and unsystematized pragmatism which is to philosophical pragmatism what practical materialism is to philosophical materialism, and which merges into what people generally call "common sense." This almost instinctive utilitarianism is inseparable, moreover, from the materialistic tendency: common sense consists in not venturing beyond the terrestrial horizon, as well as in not paying attention to anything devoid of an immediate practical interest; it is "common sense," above all, that regards the world of the senses as alone being real and admits of no knowledge beyond what proceeds from the senses; and even this limited degree of knowledge is of value in its eyes only in so

far as it allows of satisfying material needs and also sometimes because it feeds a certain kind of sentimentalism, since sentiment, as must be frankly admitted at the risk of shocking contemporary "moralism," really is very closely related to matter. No room is left in all this for intelligence, except in so far as it may consent to be put to the service of practical ends, acting as a mere instrument subordinated to the requirements of the lowest or corporeal portion of the human individual, "a tool for making tools," to quote a significant expression of Bergson's: "pragmatism" in all its forms amounts to a complete indifference to truth.

Under these conditions industry can no longer by considered simply as an application of science, one of which science in itself ought to remain completely independent; it becomes the very object and justification of science, so that in this realm also we find that the normal relations have been reversed. What the modern world has devoted its entire energy to bringing about, even when it has claimed to be pursuing science in its own way, is really nothing but the development of industry and machinery; and in thus seeking to dominate matter and to mold it to their purposes, men have only succeeded, as we said at the beginning, in turning themselves into its slaves; for not only have they restricted their intellectual ambitions—if it is permissible to use such an expression in this instance—to the invention and construction of machines, but they have also ended by turning into mere machines themselves. Indeed "specialization," so enthusiastically advocated by certain sociologists under the name of a "division of labor," has imposed itself not only upon scholars but also upon technicians and even ordinary laborers, and for the latter all intelligent work has thereby been rendered impossible; very different from the craftsmen of former times, they have become no more than servants of machines, forming as it were a single unit with them; in a purely mechanical way they are obliged to repeat continually certain prescribed movements, which never vary and are always performed in the same way, so as to avoid the slightest loss of time; at least such are the requirements of those American methods which are considered to represent the most advanced stage of "progress." The

fact is that it is solely a question of producing the greatest possible quantity; quality receives scant attention and it is quantity alone that counts; we are brought back once more to the same conclusion that we had already reached in other fields: modern civilization can justly be described as a quantitative civilization, which is only another way of saying that it is a material civilization.

To convince oneself more completely of the truth of this statement one has only to notice the tremendous influence exerted nowadays by economic factors alike on the lives of peoples and of individuals; industry, commerce, finance, these seem to be the only things that count; and this agrees with what we have already remarked elsewhere about the only surviving social distinctions being based upon material wealth. Politics appear to be altogether dominated by economics and commercial competition exercises a preponderant influence upon the relations between peoples; it may be that this is only so in appearance and that these factors are not so much causes as means of action; but the selection of such means clearly indicates the nature of the age which finds them opportune.

Moreover, our contemporaries are convinced that it is economic conditions that dictate historical events almost exclusively, and they even imagine that this has always been the case; a theory has even been invented according to which everything is explainable in terms of economic factors alone, and it bears the significant name of "historical materialism." Here also may be seen the effect of one of those processes of suggestion to which we have already referred, the power of which is all the greater in that they correspond with the tendencies of the general mentality; and the result in this case is that economic factors have really come to decide almost everything that occurs in the social sphere. It is doubtless true that the masses have always been led in one way or another, and it could be said that their part in history consists primarily in allowing themselves to be led, since they represent a predominantly passive element, a materia in the Aristotelian sense of the word; but in order to lead them today it is sufficient to possess oneself of purely material means, taking the word matter

this time in its ordinary sense, and this clearly shows to what depths the present age has sunk; and at the same time these same masses are made to believe that they are not being led, but that they are acting spontaneously and governing themselves, and the fact that they believe this to be true gives an idea of the extent of their unintelligence.

As economic factors have been mentioned, we will take the opportunity to draw attention to an all too common illusion on the subject, which consists in imagining that relations established in the field of trade can serve to draw people closer together and bring about an understanding between them, whereas in reality the effect is just the contrary. Matter, as we have often pointed out, partakes essentially of the nature of multiplicity and division, and is therefore a source of struggle and conflict; similarly, whether it be a case of peoples or of individuals, the economic sphere remains and cannot but remain one of a rivalry of interests. In particular the West cannot count upon industry, any more than upon modern science which is inseparable from it, to supply a basis for an understanding with the East; if Orientals get to the point of accepting this industry as a troublesome, though transitory, necessity—and for them it could hardly amount to more than that—it will only be as a weapon enabling them to resist the invasion of the West and to safeguard their own existence. It is important to understand that things could not well be otherwise: those Orientals who resign themselves to the prospect of economic competition with the West, in spite of the repugnance they feel for this kind of activity, can only do so with one purpose in mind, namely to rid themselves of a foreign domination based on brute force, on the material power, that is to say, which industry places at its disposal; violence calls forth violence, but it should be recognized that it is not the Orientals who have solicited conflict in this field.

Furthermore, apart from the question of relations between East and West, it is easy to see that one of the most conspicuous results of industrial development is the continual perfecting of engines of war and the formidable increase in their powers of destruction. This alone should be enough to shatter the pacifist dreams of certain admirers of modern "progress";

but these dreamers and "idealists" are incorrigible and their credulity seems to know no bounds. Certainly the "humanitarianism" at present so much in vogue does not deserve to be taken seriously; but it is strange that people should talk so much about putting an end to war at a time when the ravages it causes are greater than they have ever been before, not only because the means of destruction have been multiplied, but also because, since wars are no longer fought between comparatively small armies composed entirely of professional soldiers, all the individuals on both sides are flung against each other indiscriminately, including those who are least qualified to carry out this kind of function. Here again is a typical example of present-day confusion, and it is truly amazing, for anyone who cares to think about it, that a "mass call-up" or "general mobilization" should have come to be considered quite a natural thing and that, with very few exceptions, the minds of all should have accepted the idea of an "armed nation." In this also one can see a result of the belief in the power of numbers alone: it is in keeping with the quantitative character of modern civilization to set in motion enormous masses of combatants; and at the same time in this way the demands of "equalitarianism" are satisfied as well as by means of such institutions as "compulsory education." Let it be added that these generalized wars have only been made possible by the arising of another specifically modern phenomenon, that is to say by the formation of "nations," a consequence, on the one hand, of the destruction of the feudal system, and, on the other, of the simultaneous disruption of the higher unity of medieval Christendom; and, without pausing to consider a subject that would carry us too far afield, let it be pointed out that matters have been made still worse, by the refusal to recognize any spiritual authority, which, under normal conditions, should be an effective arbiter, occupying a position, as it must do of its very nature, above all the conflicts pertaining to the political order. Repudiation of the spiritual authority is in its way also an example of practical materialism; and even those people who in theory claim to recognize such an authority, refuse in practice to allow it any real influence or any power of intervention in the social sphere, exactly in the

same way that they fence off religion from the concerns of their everyday existence; whether in public or in private life, it is the same mental attitude that prevails.

Even admitting that material development offers certain advantages, though only from a very relative standpoint, it may well be asked whether, in view of such consequences as we have just been describing, those advantages are not heavily outweighed by other disadvantages. We are not thinking of the many things of incomparably greater worth that have been sacrificed for the sake of this one type of development, of the higher forms of knowledge that have been forgotten, of the intellectuality that has been destroyed and the spirituality that has disappeared; simply taking modern civilization for what it is in itself it can well be maintained that, if the advantages and disadvantages of what has been brought about were to be compared, the result might even so, on balance, prove to be a negative one. Inventions, which at present go on being multiplied with ever-increasing momentum, are all the more dangerous because they call into play forces the real nature of which is completely unknown to the very people that make use of them; and this demonstrates conclusively the worthlessness of modern science from the explanatory point of view, as knowledge that is to say, even when limited to the physical sphere: at the same time the fact that these considerations in no wise cause practical applications to be restrained proves that this science is far from being disinterested and that it is industry which is the only real object of its researches. As the danger of these inventions—even of those not purposely designed to play a fatal part where mankind is concerned, and which nevertheless cause so many catastrophes, not to mention unsuspected disturbances in the terrestrial environment—as this danger, we say, will no doubt continue to grow to an extent that is difficult to foretell, it is permissible to suppose, without too much improbability, that it is perhaps by this means that the modern world will succeed in bringing about its own destruction, unless it can check its present breakneck course while there is yet time.

As far as modern inventions are concerned, however, it is not enough

to criticize them on the grounds that they are dangerous, and we must go further than that; people speak of the "benefits" of what they have become accustomed to call "progress," and which one might agree to describe thus so long as care is taken to point out clearly that the progress is of a purely material kind; but are not these so highly esteemed "benefits" largely deceptive? Today men claim that they are increasing their "welfare" by this means; in our belief this goal which they are aiming at, even if it actually were to be attained, is not worth the expenditure of so great an effort; but, at the same time, it seems extremely debatable whether it is being attained. In the first place, the fact should be taken into account that not all men have the same tastes or the same needs and that there are still some who, in spite of everything, might wish to avoid the modern restlessness and mania for speed, but who are no longer in a position to do so; can anyone presume to maintain that it is a "benefit" to these people to have imposed upon them what is so entirely contrary to their own nature? The answer will be given that such people are few in number nowadays, and therefore that there is every justification for regarding them as a negligible minority, just as also in the field of politics the majority arrogates to itself the right to crush minorities, which, in its eyes, have evidently no right to exist, since their very existence runs counter to the "equalitarian" passion for uniformity. But, if one takes mankind in its entirety instead of limiting one's view to the inhabitants of the Western world, the question assumes a different aspect; has not the majority of a moment ago now become a minority? But it is no longer the same argument which is made to serve in this case and, by a peculiar contradiction, it is in the name of their "superiority" that the "equalitarians" seek to impose their own civilization on the rest of the world, and to cause trouble among people who have never asked them for anything; and as this "superiority" exists solely in a material sense it is only natural that it should be imposed by the crudest means. Let there be no mistake about it: if the general public accepts the pretext of "civilization" in all good faith, there are some for whom it amounts to no more than mere moralist hypocrisy, a cloak for their designs of conquest

and economic ambition; but what strange times indeed, when so many men allow themselves to be persuaded that they are making a people happy by reducing them to subjection, by robbing them of what is most precious in their eyes, namely their own civilization, by compelling them to adopt customs and institutions which were intended for another race, and by coercing them into assuming the most distasteful occupations in order that they may perforce come to acquire things for which they have not the slightest use! That however is the position today: the modern West cannot tolerate the idea that men should prefer to work less and be content to live on little; as quantity alone counts, and as everything that eludes the grasp of the senses is held moreover to be nonexistent, it is taken for granted that anyone not producing material things must be an "idler"; without even taking into account the criticism commonly leveled at the Orientals on this score, one has only to observe the attitude adopted by Europeans towards their own contemplative orders, even in supposedly religious circles. In such a world there is no longer any room for intellectuality or for what is of a purely inward nature, for those are things which can neither be seen nor touched, weighed nor counted; there is only room for outward action in all its forms, including those most completely devoid of meaning. Furthermore it is not surprising that the Anglo-Saxon passion for "sport" gains more and more ground every day; the ideal of the modern world is the "human animal" who has developed his muscular strength to the utmost; its heroes are the athletes, should they even be brutes; it is they who awaken the popular enthusiasm and it is their exploits that command the passionate interest of the crowd; a world in which such things are possible has indeed sunk low and would seem to be nearing its end.

However, let us put ourselves for a moment in the position of those who pin their hopes to the ideal of material welfare and who therefore rejoice at all the improvements to life furnished by modern "progress"; are they quite sure that they are not being made dupes? Is it true that men are happier today than they used to be simply because they command swifter means of transport and other things of that kind, or because of their more

agitated and complicated mode of life? The truth would appear to be quite the contrary; disequilibrium cannot be the condition of any real happiness; moreover, the more needs a man has the greater likelihood there is of his lacking something, and consequently of his being unhappy; modern civilization aims at creating ever greater and greater artificial needs, and, as we have already remarked, it will always create more needs than it can satisfy, because, once launched upon such a course, it becomes exceedingly difficult to pull up, and, indeed, there is no reason for pulling up at one stage rather than at another. It was no hardship for people to do without things that did not exist and which they could never have even dreamed of; now, on the contrary, they are bound to suffer when deprived of those things, since they have grown accustomed to regarding them as necessities, with the result that they have in fact really become necessary to them. Consequently, with all the power at their disposal, they struggle to acquire whatever can procure them material satisfactions, the only kind they are capable of appreciating; they become absorbed in "making money," because it is money which enables them to obtain these things, and the more they possess the more they desire because they are continually discovering fresh needs, until this pursuit becomes their only aim in life. Hence that ferocious competition which certain "evolutionists" have raised to the dignity of a scientific law under the name of the "struggle for existence," the logical result of which is that only the strongest, in the most narrowly material sense of the word, have a right to exist. Hence also the envy and even hatred with which those possessed of wealth are regarded by those who are not so endowed; how could men to whom equalitarian theories have been preached fail to react when all around they see inequality in the most material order of things, the order to which they are bound to be most sensitive? If modern civilization is destined to collapse some day under the pressure of the disorderly appetites it has aroused in the masses, one would have to be blind indeed not to perceive therein the just punishment of its fundamental vice, or, to express oneself without recourse to moral phraseology, the repercussion of its own action in that same sphere in which it was exer-

cised. It is written in the Gospel: "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword"; those who unloose the brute forces of matter will perish, crushed by those same forces, of which they are no longer masters when they rashly set them in motion, and which they cannot claim to hold back indefinitely once launched on their fatal course; forces of nature or forces of mass man, or both in combination, it makes little difference, because in either case it is the laws of matter which come into play and which will inexorably destroy those who believed it possible to manipulate them without themselves rising superior to matter. The Gospel also says: "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand"; this saying too is directly applicable to the modern world with its material civilization, which cannot fail, from its very nature, to provoke strife and division in all directions. The conclusion is only too easy to draw and further considerations need not be elaborated in order to enable one, without fear of deception, to predict a tragic end to the present world, unless a radical change, amounting to a complete reversal of direction, should intervene within a very short time.

We are well aware that some people will reproach us with having omitted to mention, while describing modern civilization and its materialism, certain elements which seem at least to mitigate it to a certain extent; and indeed, if none such existed it is highly probable that this civilization would have perished miserably long since. We do not therefore in any way dispute the existence of such elements, but at the same time we must not let ourselves fall into illusions; on the one hand, it would be incorrect to include under this heading the various philosophical movements bearing labels such as "spiritualism" or "idealism," or anything among contemporary tendencies that takes the form of "moralism" or "sentimentalism"; we have already sufficiently discussed these questions and we will simply recall the fact that, from our point of view, these attitudes of mind are not less profane than a theoretical or practical materialism and are in reality much less far remote from it than might appear at first sight; on the other hand, if some remnants of true spirituality have been preserved, that can only be in spite of the modern outlook and in opposition to it. As far as strictly Western el-

ements are concerned, it is in the religious sphere only that these remnants of spirituality are still to be found; but we have already pointed out how shrunken has become the conception of religion at the present time, and what a shallow and mediocre idea even believers themselves have formed of it and to what an extent it has been emptied of its intellectuality, which is but one and the same thing as true spirituality; under these conditions, if certain possibilities still remain, they scarcely do so more than latently, and their effective influence at present amounts to very little. The vigor of a religious tradition is nevertheless to be admired when, though withdrawn into a kind of virtuality, it survives in spite of all the attempts made during several centuries to stifle and annihilate it; and, if one pauses to think about it, it will be apparent that there is something about a resistance of this kind implying the presence of a more than human power; but, once again let it be repeated, the tradition in question does not belong to the modern world, nor does it form one of its component elements, but is the exact opposite of all its tendencies and aspirations. It is necessary to say this openly and not look for deceptive reconciliations; between the religious point of view, in the true sense of the word, and the modern attitude of mind there can be nothing but antagonism; any compromise can but serve to enfeeble the former and strengthen the latter, nor will the hostility of the modern mentality be lessened on that account, since it cannot help desiring the total destruction of everything in mankind that reflects a reality superior to the human.

It is said that the modern West is Christian, but this is a mistake: the modern outlook is anti-Christian because it is essentially anti-religious; and it is anti-religious because, in a still wider sense, it is anti-traditional; it is this that gives it its particular character and causes it to be what it is. Assuredly, something of Christianity has passed over even into the anti-Christian civilization of our time, with the result that its most "advanced" representatives (as they style themselves in their own special language) cannot help having undergone and continuing to undergo, involuntarily and perhaps unconsciously, a certain Christian influence, if only an indi-

rect one; this is so because a break with the past, however radical, can never be altogether complete and such as to preclude all continuity. We will go further and say that everything of any value still to be found in the modern world came to it from Christianity, or at any rate through Christianity, which brought with it the whole heritage of former traditions and has kept that heritage alive, in so far as the conditions of the West permitted, and still bears its latent possibilities within itself; but, even among those calling themselves Christians, is there anyone at the present time who retains a full consciousness of these possibilities? Where, even in Catholicism, are to be found the men who understand the deeper meaning of the doctrine they profess outwardly, and who are not simply content with "believing" in a more or less superficial way, sentimentally rather than through the intelligence, but who really "know" the truth of the religious tradition which they claim for their own? One would indeed welcome some evidence of the existence of at least a few such people, for that would be the greatest and perhaps the only hope of salvation for the West; but it must be admitted that up to the present time none have made themselves known; can it be supposed that, like certain sages of the East, they live apart in some inaccessible retreat, or must this last hope be finally abandoned? The West was Christian in the Middle Ages but is so no longer; if it be said that it might become so again, there is no one who can desire this more fervently than ourselves, and may it come about in a shorter time than all that is to be seen around would lead one to suppose; but let no man delude himself on the subject; if this should happen, the modern world will have had its day.

28 WHEN U DONT USE INTERNET 4 A WEEK!

Alright, it's happened. I finally **ASCENDED**. I went an entire week without using the internet whatsoever. Not just the internet, I actually ended up not using **computers** or phones or anything like that, either. If I wanted to do a good clickbait video, I'd probably say something like 'AND

IT CHANGED MY LIFE.' But the weird thing is, it actually **didn't** change my life. In fact, my life, weirdly enough, was... it definitely wasn't *exactly the same*, but you realize exactly how little you *need* the internet when you go without it for all this time. I've talked about it in other videos, mainly when discussing social media and cell phones and how much I hate them. There's this tendency, this habit that people get when they're addicted to cell phones, where if they go a second without being entertained or even if they imagine they **might** become bored, they just *immediately* pull out their phone and scroll through the social media feed or whatever. And psychologically, what happens there is, once you start doing that and you see all this pseudo-information, all this junk on social media, you sort of *feel like you're being informed* or you're bettering yourself, or you're learning more about your friends by doing this kind of stuff. But when you go without it cold turkey, you sort of realize exactly how UNTRUE that is. It was certainly the case for me when I went a week without the internet.

So anyway, how did this happen? Now, first off, a week or so before this week happened, I sort of felt like, 'Okay, I've been using the internet in maybe anti-social ways, in the sense that I was using it unnecessarily. I don't have a social media account or anything, but I do have email. *I get lots and lots of emails.* And I barely respond to five percent of my emails, but it *still* takes up a lot of time to deal with them, and I guess there's a lot of enjoyment in that. In the same way, I have RSS feeds for all these things that I subscribe to, and sometimes you just get too many. You're put in a state where you always feel like, *'Great, this new article is up here, I better look at that,'* or *'This guy posted this, better go check it out.'* It ends up being the *same* as social media, just without the upvotes and stuff like that. So I thought, *'Okay, I've been using this stuff too much. I'm neurotically updating my RSS feeds too much, so I'm just gonna go without it. We're just gonna go without it for a week, see how we can do.'*

I woke up the next day, and it should be obvious that once I turned off the internet, that was the most productive day of my life. It was probably the most productive day of my life *before 10 o'clock in the morning*. The

thing is, when you have the ability to be bored[2], when you have boredom sort of lurking around you, you actually end up doing all the stuff that you've known you've had to do for a long time. One of the first things I did is I actually cleaned out and washed up my master bathroom, which I hadn't really been keeping up with. [3]"

So, I scrubbed all that up with a Brillo pad. I ended up cleaning up my garage, fixing my car, replacing the valve on my spare tire, finally getting a code reader for my car, and changing the oil. All these things, done all at once, most of which I've been putting off for at least a month. I've needed an oil change for at least a month or so, maybe around there, to be safe. So, all this kind of stuff, I ended up doing it immediately.

Now, I'm not trying to say that not using the internet's *main benefits* were actually the fact that I got way more stuff done, although it definitely is true that I got way more stuff done. You *also* spend your time very differently. In this time, I probably read two or three books. I usually read *no books* a week, but I probably read two or three books (or at least parts of some other ones). I also had long phone conversations with people because, you know, if I'm just sitting at the house, you get bored and... The thing is, here's what happens on the internet: you're browsing a site, you get bored of that, then you go to another site. You're browsing that site and you get bored, you go to yet another site.

In real life, if you're bored, you *do one thing you have to do*, and if you get bored of that, you go to another. I started running ethernet wires in my attic, which I've actually been meaning to do for, like, a full year.

And when I got bored of that, I'd do something else. Or if I was bored of doing all this kind of work, I'd call a friend and talk for an hour, which is something that's just not in my usual routine nowadays. I actually got a new phone, by the way.[4] All this kind of stuff, like, I actually organized, I

[2]This is another video I gotta do, like "Why being bored is good"

[3]When you have a well, there're a lot of minerals that get in the bottom of bathtubs and stuff like that.

[4]Well, a "new phone." I had this phone that had really bad audio. We're talking about landlines here, of course. You know, we're boomers, we use landlines. But the audio was just bad. But I ended up finding a nice rotary phone that was a little older, but the audio works a little better. So, I like this new phone.

moved a bunch of stuff. Anyway, I'm just yapping about the things I did in my life. It's not too important, but suffice it to say that **I got lots of stuff done**, and you just **spend your time differently**. I went out to town, but usually when I go out, I pretty much do what I need to do and come back. But in this case, I talked to random people, including an old lady in a shop. I ended up talking with her for like 90 minutes or something like that. Just all this kind of stuff that normally you wouldn't do. Your time becomes more important when it's not burdened by trivial things. And not just more important, but you have so much more of it that you could actually do things that are a little more in-depth, if that makes any sense. They become more meaningful and you're not constrained by trivial tasks, and you start to become more social.

And the weirdest thing is, even though the temptation of using the internet occurred to me several times, let me tell you, when I first turned on the internet again, it wasn't as tempting as I thought it would be. You're always like, *"Okay, well, I could use the internet and sort of cheat here,"* but I had so many better things to do, and it just **recalibrated** my desires. It's a very different experience, which is why I encourage you to try it out. During that week, Time felt like it was like *months* in terms of the things I got done. Every single day was like a week, basically, or a long time, anyway.

Eventually, the week ended, and I was like, "Okay, now I can use the internet again, by my own valuation." So, I decided to turn it on, and of course, in the back of my mind, for all this time, I was like, *"Oh, dude, something terrible on the internet could have happened! My websites could be down, or someone could have hacked my bank account, etc..."* I just had crazy thoughts. Then I logged on, synced my emails, saw the week's worth of emails that I hadn't seen at all. There was only *one* that was important that I missed, and that was *no big deal*. But all the other ones were not important. I remember turning on the internet again, and I thought it was gonna be like a guilty pleasure, like *"Oh, yes, I'm finally on the internet again. It feels so good. I can do all this kind of stuff that I've been wanting*

to do."

But *really*, my first impression was, "Wow, I haven't looked at the screen for like a week, and it's actually really painful to look at the screen." My boomer eyes were squinting, and I was just like, "What? It literally hurts to look at a screen." You don't realize it until you haven't done it for a while. (I didn't even look at a cell phone screen, except for a split second when I had to turn my cell phone on and off at one point.) I usually keep my cell phone off all the time, but there was one situation where I had to. (Of course, I had airplane mode on, so no internet.) It was not like the guilty pleasure I thought it would be. It's almost as if I've been deconditioned from using the internet.

I feel sort of bad, as I did record videos over that period, not on the computer, but with my phone. And I don't know, I *barely feel motivated* to upload them because **the internet seems like some fake world now**. Now, I *literally* feel like a guy who's just talking to his phone in the woods. Is that what I am? I don't know.

I always highly recommend people to reduce their dependence on technology, and this is probably a good example. I *thought* that I'd be really bored when I stopped using the internet, and I'm sure you will be bored to some degree. But the issue is, boredom is the thing that drives you to do things that are important. So, if you're in this constant state of pseudo-simulation, like, you're never going to get anything done. That's just the fact of the matter.

Now, at this point, I don't know if I'll be like, *"Okay, I'm just going to go without the internet for like a month or something like that and go from there."* Because I sort of feel like, "Now I can really easily constrain my internet usage. It's not something that's too difficult," for, in the past couple of days where I HAVE been using the internet, Idk, I haven't been using it that much, frankly. It's not been like I'm returning to some kind of drug.

Anyway, that's about it. I encourage you to do it, try it out. Stop using social media!

29 Kyle's Conversation with Luke Smith

Today, I am interviewing Luke Smith. He has a YouTube channel with over 200,000 subscribers and a website where he discusses a range of topics, from his experiences in academia to philosophy, linguistics, minimalism, living below your means, and achieving true freedom from the system—living on your own land and exploring how to attain real freedom in the modern age. I started watching his videos when I wasn't even Orthodox; I was still Catholic. I remember seeing him talk about Orthodoxy, but at the time, it just didn't register with me what it even was. He has discussed Orthodoxy increasingly over the past few years, so I'm really glad we could finally collaborate. I want to learn about your journey coming to Orthodoxy. Thanks for joining me!

Luke:

Yeah, thanks for having me on! I guess it's been a long time coming, and in a way, it's a re-debut for me on the internet because I haven't been on here in a while. I kind of forget how it works! So, yeah, thanks for having me on. Lots of people at my parish are familiar with your channel. A while back, you did a video on me, and everyone was like, "Oh, Luke, you're on the internet!" I was like, "Yeah, I guess." So, it's awesome to be here!

My first question for you is: what was your upbringing like? Were you raised with any religion? Did you have an atheist phase or anything like that?

Luke:

Yes to both, I guess! I grew up in what I would call a typical American Evangelical household. I went to a Southern Baptist church growing up; my parents were both Southern Baptists. I can give a kind of bird's eye view, but I'm not sure how much detail people need. Like a lot of people, I went through my teenage years and into a phase of doubt. Let me start before that. I know a lot of Orthodox people have this tension about their origins—they look back at their upbringing in heterodoxy and think, "I was

taught wrong on this or that." While I share some of that, I think I generally had a good upbringing.

My perspective is that when you become Orthodox, you enter a phase of being a catechumen, where you learn what it actually means to be a Christian and how to overcome the passions and have faith. In that sense, my early life as an Evangelical was kind of like being a catechumen in the Orthodox faith. My catechumen experience was not ideal; there were certainly some "poison pills" along the way. However, as I returned to the faith, I don't necessarily see it as a betrayal of my upbringing. If anything, it perfected it. I get to keep all the good things, while discarding the more questionable aspects of American Evangelicalism.

Even as a child, there were things I grew up with that I thought were a bit strange, but I accepted them as how people do things. I try not to look back with a critical lens, though there's a temptation to do so. It's easy to think, "I was so foolish for believing that," but I try not to react that way anymore. Regardless, I experienced doubt and went through a prolonged atheist phase.

If we dive into the details, my biography has too many twists and turns. It's not really about me; some people might say, "Oh, that sounds similar to my experience," but I find it's best to focus on the journey. So, I grew up Evangelical and went through an atheist phase for most of my adult life, during which I had no interest in faith. I'm the kind of person who doesn't have a strong spiritual orientation; it's more of a personality thing. But somehow, I found my way into the Orthodox Church, which I consider a blessing.

When did you start to fall away from the faith? Was it in college, which is a typical experience for many?

Luke:

It was before that. It was definitely a lot earlier, I would say in my early teenage years—around middle school. During that time, I was very pious. I was trying to figure out the Bible and read a lot on my own. I remember one Sunday reading through Revelation, and there were some deep insights

in there. Of course, that's a very dangerous thing to do, especially in the Orthodox Church, where, as most people probably know, the Book of Revelation is the one book you don't read in the liturgical cycle. It's kind of set apart.

In Protestantism, there's this democratic ideal, which is problematic. To be clear, many Protestant individuals, myself included, thought, "I can just open up the Bible and figure things out for myself." I didn't have the authority to do that, but as a middle schooler, I was quite pious, almost to the point of being overly earnest. I wanted to live a proper life, even though I didn't necessarily see spiritual things everywhere.

As I entered my teenage years, there were issues going on within American Evangelicalism that I began to notice. Politically and socially, it was unraveling. This was around the time of the Iraq War, where I saw a lot of troubling attitudes among evangelicals. There was this mindset, I think contained even demonic elements, that caused harm to Christians in the Middle East and was tied to political Zionism. For those who are a bit younger, after September 11th, there was an excitement among evangelicals about being involved in geopolitical issues. The attitude was, "We're going to destroy Babylon; we're going to invade Iraq, and the world is going to end in a couple of years." The "Left Behind" series exemplified this mindset.

Looking back, I can't believe I was ever part of that. It's not to say that there aren't pious individuals within that framework, but many people were caught up in a simplistic worldview. One of the first moments I realized something was wrong was when I began to look into the situation in the Middle East. I started asking, "What's really going on in the Iraq War? Who is winning, and who is losing?" I discovered that the Christian population in Iraq was devastated, similar to the plight of Christians in Palestine and Syria. This realization led me to question whether I was inadvertently supporting evil actions in the world.

It wasn't a lack of belief, but rather a growing awareness that the simplistic worldview I had been given didn't capture the full truth. I began to

realize that I wasn't getting the complete picture.

Wow, did that lead to a sort of agnosticism for you? Like, realizing this simplistic worldview you were given was more complex? Or did you become a militant atheist or anything like that?

Luke: I would say I gradually started learning more about the modern secular worldview. There's not really a name for it, but I got into evolution—not just as an explanation of things, but more as an ideology. I began to see it as a way to understand how humans work, how the passions work, and all that kind of stuff. The idea, not just in evolution but in science more broadly, is that it tends to strip away the complexities of human nature, reducing people to machines.

When you want to understand humans as machines, you can explain them, control them, and use them for your own purposes. As a young person, I became very interested in that worldview. At the same time, evangelicalism was kind of imploding, even in the churches I was attending.

I was in a small church that was on a hill surrounded by beautiful oak trees. We decided to move to another part of the county, which was one of the fastest-growing ZIP codes in the country. We thought we had enough money to build a big building and start a new church there. But during this period, everything started going wrong. A lot of the people in my church didn't really know what they were getting into. They ended up selling the old church, and some company bulldozed the hill, building a Walmart in its place. That's actually where I was baptized as a Baptist—it's now a Walmart.

I mention that not just as a funny anecdote, but to highlight what happened to this era of evangelicalism in suburban America. It really struck me; I think about the church I used to attend. Being Orthodox has given me everything I used to have as a Protestant—the good things, the true, noble, and right aspects. But I can't really go back to the kind of church that existed in the early '90s. Those Baptist churches just don't exist anymore. They've all transformed into slideshows and rock concerts.

You might be able to find some primitive Baptists doing different things,

but that old religion is gone. Even if I wanted to go back, it's not an option. It's been like this for every generation. People might still identify as Baptists, but the churches they go to are totally different from the ones their parents and grandparents attended. Even on an Excel spreadsheet of beliefs their beliefs match up, the experience has changed dramatically.

So, during that period, as that world unraveled, my church started losing people after the move. They had this huge financial obligation to meet, and eventually, over the years, attendance dwindled. They ended up selling the church to a mega church. In fact, both churches I grew up in were sold to mega churches.

And they're just doing who-knows-what nowadays. When I was in that environment, I could see the writing on the wall; I saw my faith disappearing. At the same time, I was faced with all these passions and temptations from the world, which became very appealing. The ideology of atheism started to attract me. I had friends who were into that, and my church was passing away.

Part of that was irrational, but I was trying to justify my atheism during that period. It set people up for a difficult situation; it requires a lot of spiritual maturity to overcome the temptations to be worldly, and at that point in my life, I just wasn't fit to do it. So, I very much became an atheist—fully. I'm not one of those people who says, "Well, technically, I'm agnostic." I was an atheist, and I had no qualms about it.

I went through a brief period of hostility towards religion, but it was very short-lived. After that, I began to see religion as just another aspect of the world that could be studied. Interestingly enough, even in my atheism, I saw God's grace appearing in ways that might not have happened if I had taken a different path. During this time, I really got into studying early church history and even the history of the Roman Empire.

I didn't think much about Orthodoxy at first; my perspective was more about realizing that the religion I grew up in was very different from historical practices. For instance, there's the story of St. Constantine the Great, who famously waited until the end of his life to be baptized. That's not an

Orthodox practice today, but back then, many believed they could wait to confess and just get baptized later. The church doesn't do that anymore, but it highlights the theology of baptism—that it makes a spiritual difference; it's a sacrament where your sins are forgiven.

It's a little funny, since people in that time were trying to game the system, but the point is that as a Baptist, that view was entirely different from what we believed about baptism. When I read early church disputes, it wasn't just pseudo-Protestant sects that were labeled heretical; it was worse than that for a Protestant. These early Christians were discussing a religion that was so different from what I grew up with that, as an atheist, I thought, "Well, I guess things have just changed." I definitely realized that what I grew up with was very ahistorical.

It's not to say it's all bad. I don't mean any ill will towards Protestants for saying this, but my priest puts it like this: Protestants don't have the full deck of cards. They have some of the cards and understand certain things, but when they lack the right ones, they often replace them with what they want or with expediencies. So, for the longest time, I was basically an atheist—that was my mindset.

Wow. So, as an atheist, what compelled you to read the early church fathers? Were you just interested in understanding different religions?

Luke: I think I was initially curious, but I also thought that just reading about it wouldn't make me Orthodox. I was still under the impression that historical Christianity didn't really exist anymore. Protestants tend to believe intuitively that the early church had disappeared. Their idea is that there's this thing called the Bible, and they're using it to reconstruct a society that no longer exists.

I remember when I was a really little kid, I was at VBS or some church event, and afterward, I asked my mother, "Where did the Bible come from?" Bless her heart, her innocent reaction was, "I think we found it in the ground one day; we uncovered it." In her defense, she might have been thinking about the Dead Sea Scrolls or something like that. But that's such a perfect illustration of what you grow up believing as a Protestant. You

have this idea that the church is something we're creating right now, reading it from a document; it's not a living, breathing historical society.

That's also why many Protestants react to things like the Shroud of Turin. The scientific evidence behind the Shroud being the actual burial cloth of Christ is incredibly compelling—if you really look into it. I mean, don't just read Wikipedia, since they're gonna be against it, obviously. But when you dig deeper, it's amazing. Yet, Protestants *almost want* to deny it. They want to deny the existence of relics and historical miracles, which puts them in the same boat as atheists.

I think this stems from their implicit belief that there is no historical Christianity still around; they see themselves as just discovering it through the Bible. That perspective is fundamentally flawed. The Orthodox Church has preserved so much detailed information in the lives of the saints and other teachings for our instruction. We're not groping around in the dark. We might struggle within our own souls to overcome passions, but the Church has provided us with so much guidance.

As my priest says, without that, you really don't have the full deck of cards. Sure, some Protestants or people from other religions may attain an admirable level of morality or saintliness, but it would be so much better if they had everything they truly need.

Luke: Both groups—atheists and Protestants—seem to have this core belief in deconstruction. For Protestants, it's about getting rid of the "traditions of men," but in doing so, they end up deconstructing the entire faith. Orthodoxy is fundamentally based on tradition, and the Bible itself is part of tradition. When you start deconstructing the liturgy and other aspects, you're dismantling something that has been passed down, which isn't solely contained within the Bible.

The atheists take that one step further. If you're going to deconstruct everything about Christianity, why not deconstruct the Bible itself? They end up not constructing anything; it's just an attempt to create a lowest common denominator belief.

Luke: If you look historically or cladistically at the history of the Church,

you can trace where this kind of liberalized religion comes from. It originates from a generation of Protestants, like Martin Luther, who started to question scripture in a peculiar way.

Luther didn't remove books from the Bible, but he demoted what we now call the Apocrypha for theological reasons. The next generation of German scholarship went even further into deconstructing the text of the Bible. German higher criticism is very much a product of the Protestant Reformation. It raises the question of where you draw the line: when do you stop being a Protestant and start becoming an atheist?

I even know of some Protestants who take it further, arguing that since some manuscripts don't include the ending of the Gospel of Mark, we shouldn't include that in our Bible. But the Church has always recognized it. Even if, say, the Apostle Mark didn't write that portion himself and maybe it was added by an assistant later, the Church treats it as the Gospel of Mark. For a Protestant, that's a significant issue because they have this idea that the Bible either came down from the sky or was dug out of the ground, existing in isolation.

The reality is we can trust the Bible because it comes from the community of the Church, which is uniform in its beliefs and practices. One of the things that blew my mind when I was exploring Orthodoxy was realizing how different it is from what I experienced in America. For example, in my Baptist background, you could go to one Baptist church and then another down the road, and they might be doing entirely different things in their services. They would have songs and preaching, but the content and theology could vary greatly.

In contrast, it was wild for me to discover that the Orthodox Church in Russia, Greece, Georgia, and all of Eastern Europe are so much on the same page. Even among the non-Chalcedonian churches, there's more similarity between them than between any two given Baptist churches. That should tell you there's something significant going on here.

There's a real sense in which people are united by a tradition, and you can truly tell when there's a significant divergence. That realization was

wild for me. As a Protestant, your mindset is often very me-centered; you just open the Bible and interpret it based on your own understanding.

I apologize if I'm rambling a bit, but I want to clarify something. I don't mean to say anything too harsh against heterodox Christians or Protestants. The important thing is that these beliefs don't simply represent a checklist of wrong answers. The issue is that those beliefs can lead to sin. It's one thing if an innocent person misunderstands something, but when theology is based on individual interpretations of the Bible without a concept of apostolic succession and authority in the Church, it creates a problem.

In many Protestant sects, it ends up being a spiritual democracy where everyone feels equally entitled to interpret scripture. This can lead to a kind of wildness, and there's a temptation to be arrogant. I think many who convert to Orthodoxy still struggle with this idea—seeing someone else as heterodox and therefore inherently bad.

We have to recognize that erroneous beliefs or bad theology can be harmful because they affect how people live their lives. Heresies are damnable not just because someone checks the wrong box, but because they can distort how individuals process the entire world. That's something I had to grapple with growing up.

Kyle: Yeah, no, I totally agree with that. I've struggled with it, and I think people who convert to Orthodoxy struggle with it too. There's such a richness of Truth—it's like a fire hose. You want to share it with everyone, but you can end up going too far. When interacting with the heterodox, maybe you don't do it with love. Finding that balance—giving the truth in love—is what we're all called to do.

Luke: Yeah, I think most of the time—speaking for myself—there's a tendency to look at someone, see your old self in them, and want to condemn them for that reason. Not only is condemning someone wrong, but it also means you're *holding on*, on some level, to your own sin.

For example, when I see a Muslim—I was never a Muslim, I've never really interacted with them, so I don't have strong reactions—but when it's something I grew up with, I think, "How could you possibly do that?" And

that's just the wrong way to look at it.

I'm reminded of something my priest said. It's a little different, but I think it's analogous. He told a story about monks in a monastery. One of the monks, in a moment of pride, said something like, "I haven't eaten meat in 15 years." And the abbot responded, "You should've been eating meat for all these 15 years because your pride in that moment has completely undone all your fasting. It would've been better if you hadn't fasted at all."

In the same way, if you're Orthodox, it's one thing to have the right beliefs. But if you don't have Christlike humility, you're not truly Orthodox. For all the right boxes you check and all the lifestyle changes you make, if you're arrogant about it, you've lost everything. You're not like Christ.

When Christ interacts with people—take the Samaritan woman, for example—she was part of a syncretic sect, partially pagan. He doesn't say she's not wrong, but that's not how He approaches her. He doesn't come at her with arrogance or condemnation. That's the model we need to follow.

The first time I ever went to an Orthodox church—it's a bit of a story. I had been talking about Orthodoxy on my channel for a while, but I was the last person to actually convert. Just to be clear, there were people on my channel who heard me talking about Orthodoxy during live streams. I know at least one person who emailed me, saying he went to a church, became a catechumen, and was baptized—all before I even stepped foot in a church myself.

That hit me. I thought, "Man, I'm really slow." But it's a reminder for people like you and me of how easy it is to influence others—for good or for ill. That's dangerous. That's one of the reasons I haven't been putting up videos on my channel recently. A lot of my videos give people advice, and I don't know if I should be doing that right now.

And I want to be very careful about that. Not to say I'm not going to do it, but I feel like I have to put asterisks around everything I say.

Anyway, I'm sorry—I've opened a lot of threads here. Let me go back

to finishing the story about the first time I went to an Orthodox church.

There was a guy who was watching one of my live streams. He lived in West Virginia, which is not close to where I live. He was at Christ the Savior—I think that's the name—in Wayne, West Virginia. Father Jonah is the priest there. This guy asked Father Jonah to invite me over, and I came during Holy Week. It was an amazing experience.

The church is right under Holy Cross Monastery in West Virginia. Wonderful experience—I had a great time. But when I first talked to Father Jonah, he said something that really stuck with me. He was like, "Okay, you seem like you really want to become Orthodox. Just remember, it might happen now, or God might not open the path for you to become Orthodox for ten more years."

That hit me. It felt so different. If you grow up Protestant, it's all, "Come down the aisle, accept Jesus right now!" It's a very different mindset. But the faith in what Father Jonah said was really surprising to me. The idea that if your heart is in the right place, you don't necessarily have to rush. Sometimes God wants you to move quickly, but sometimes He doesn't, and that's okay. That mindset was so new to me, and I really appreciated it.

When I interact with priests who have been Orthodox their whole lives—or for decades—it's like I'm being exposed to something completely new. No matter how "red-pilled" I might think I am, there's still so much I don't know. I'm not there yet.

Kyle: Yeah, Orthodoxy is a spiritual gold mine. It humbles you with the depth of everything.

I want to ask a question. Earlier, when you were in that atheist or agnostic phase, did you start to believe in God first? Or was it more about looking into Christianity? Did you even know Orthodoxy was a thing? Were discerning between, say, Catholicism and other branches of Christianity? What was it like starting to believe in God again?

Luke: I think my first reflex was actually similar to what I mentioned earlier. There's belief, but there's also practice.

And I think the first thought that came to my head was, "Well, maybe religion is wrong in its beliefs"—this was me still being an atheist—"but maybe it's right in its practices. Maybe I should go to a church. Maybe I should be socially connected or something like that."

That was step number one. And while that kind of approach can be dangerous—because it's not the same as going to church with a clean heart and faith—it was still a step.

I think that first step, combined with a little bit of prayer, opened things up for me. You know how people say, "If you don't have faith, pray for faith"? That's exactly what I did. And gradually, something shifted.

Weirdly enough, it was my academic work that opened me up to the possibility of God. At the University of Arizona, where I was working on my PhD in linguistics, there were researchers studying consciousness. Consciousness, in my view, has no scientific explanation—and I would go further to say that it's *impossible* for there ever to be a scientific explanation for it.

Consciousness is something non-material, something we experience directly and constantly, yet it's not reducible to matter. You can create the most complex computer or even a philosophical zombie, but consciousness is something else entirely.

I actually wrote a blog post about this a while ago, but that realization opened me up to the possibility of God. In Orthodoxy, we have the concept of the nous, which, in a way, is connected to consciousness. It's deeply tied to God and to the Trinity. There's an entire theology surrounding this—something far beyond my level, even as a recent convert—but it's profoundly compelling.

I also started reading more broadly. I was exploring late postclassical philosophy, some hermetic writings—really weird stuff. A lot of it is questionable because it's tied to the occult. I was never into it for that reason, and no one should be. But it did open me to the possibility that these people—philosophers or writers from these traditions—were speaking within a mindset similar to the modern one but with this assumption of

God. It wasn't explicitly stated, but it was intrinsic to their way of looking at the universe.

And what I realized was that my entire way of viewing the world—the materialist mindset we all inherit from society—presupposes a kind of atheism. Even if you believe in God, in that mindset, God often feels like an add-on, something external that you force into the equation.

This is so different from how people in history understood the world. Their entire worldview assumed God as foundational. It wasn't an extra layer—it was the framework itself.

I also started thinking about how atheists deal with the philosophical problem of the universe's creation. The difference between raw atheism and raw theism, in a way, boils down to whether you think of God as a "He" or an "It." It's about how you conceptualize the fundamental source of reality.

That was step one for me—a series of little cracks in the materialist facade. My worldview, which had kept me content for a decade, started to show its insufficiency. These "edge cases"—things I thought I could just push aside with the hope of explaining them someday—weren't really edge cases. They were fundamental to how the universe works.

At the same time, God was humbling me in ways I didn't choose. I went through a period of extreme hardship when I was about 25. I lost everything I had built—my academic career, my plans, all of it.

Some of it was due to my own arrogance, but some of it was just the evil state of the world. It felt like my own pride and the brokenness of the system were conspiring against me. Yet, in hindsight, it worked out for the best.

I had to confront a choice: I could either continue trying to succeed in a corrupt system that would never make me happy, or I could step away and start over. Around this time, I moved away from the university and began seriously re-evaluating everything.

This was also when I started my YouTube channel. It marked the beginning of a shift in my life. I began attending church—not just as an observer

but as someone genuinely open to belief.

Initially, I gravitated toward Catholicism. Honestly, it was for superficial reasons. I know Latin really well and can even read the Greek scriptures a bit. My Latin, though, is much stronger than my Greek, so I felt more naturally drawn to that tradition. Knowledge of Latin gave me the opportunity to read a lot of Scholastic works—Roger Bacon, Aquinas, and others. That became a sort of accidental bridge into Orthodoxy for me. Scholasticism is like a halfway point between the modern mindset and the Orthodox mindset. That's how things unfolded in my case.

Kyle: Was there anyone specific who influenced your transition beyond the Catholic theologians? I noticed you mentioned Dr. Michael Heiser in one of your streams. Were there figures like that who helped you along the way?

Luke: Weirdly enough, no—not in a direct sense. Michael Heiser is fascinating, though. Of course, he was never Orthodox, but he really delved into topics that sometimes overlap with Orthodox theology.

It's something you see with other figures, too. For example, N.T. Wright, who's an Anglican bishop, is very close—accidentally—to being Orthodox in his theology. Most of his scholarship critiques Protestant misunderstandings from the Reformation. He talks about how, "Why Protestants were wrong in the Reformation." He essentially says, "We've been reading Paul wrong for 500 years." That kind of thing.

But as for me, I started reading Heiser after I already identified as Christian. By then, I was likely exploring Orthodoxy as well. Honestly, my journey was less about specific figures and more about process of elimination.

I realized that outside the West—outside Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church—there's this striking unity among Christians. That, in itself, felt like a powerful testimony. I knew what I grew up with, and I saw its issues. I admired much about Roman Catholicism but couldn't shake the sense that, historically, something had gone very wrong there.

While I still have Catholic friends and value many things in their tradi-

tion, I think they've lost something vital, which is heartbreaking.

For a while, I was "theologically Orthodox" but without access to a nearby parish. At the time, I thought I'd have to drive two hours just to attend an Orthodox service.

Well, there's an interesting story. I had a brief interaction with Roosh V. If you don't know, Roosh was a big figure in the manosphere before he repented and embraced Orthodoxy. He completely turned his life around. He's vanished from the internet now, which I think is admirable.

At one point, I emailed him about my situation, saying something like, "I'm set on becoming Orthodox, but there's no church anywhere nearby." He wrote back—not harshly, but firmly—and essentially said, "If there's a church four hours away, you should be driving. In the last days, even having that is a blessing."

I knew he was right. I couldn't argue with that.

Eventually, Father Jonah, who invited me to his parish in West Virginia, helped me take that next step. He even let me stay at his house. By the way, if you know about Damascene Gallery, which makes beautiful icons, that's his business. I've been to his workshop—it's amazing.

He gave me my first icons, and there's a story tied to that which he doesn't even know. I'll have to share it with him next time we meet.

At some point, I just had to swallow my laziness and commit to driving to church. For a while, I still occasionally attended Protestant services, but I eventually realized that every day I wasn't in an Orthodox church was a wasted day.

Even if I wasn't communing or wasn't yet a catechumen, just *being* there mattered. So, I started attending the Holy Mother of God, a Greek Orthodox church in Tallahassee. I went there for a bit, and I eventually found the church I go to now. I'll go ahead and "doxx" it—give them a shout-out since my baptismal sponsor actually encouraged me to! He told me during a phone call earlier today, "If you're going to talk, give our parish some love." So, here it is: I attend St. Andrew's Orthodox Church in Greenville, Florida.

It's a very small mission parish—or at least, it was small, but now it's growing rapidly. We've been seeing a lot of new people. The parish draws folks from all over—some come from Valdosta, Georgia, others from Alabama, and quite a few from Tallahassee.

That's where I was baptized, and it's been my spiritual home ever since. My baptism, for context, was actually very recent—it happened earlier this year, so it's still a fresh experience!

I was basically the last one in my group to convert. Before my baptism, I took a trip to Europe, which is actually the subject of the last video on my YouTube channel. I visited Greece, Montenegro, and a lot of amazing places, including St. Nektarios Monastery. But since I wasn't baptized yet, I couldn't fully participate—I couldn't commune.

Still, the trip was an incredible experience, even though I wasn't in a position to share in the full sacramental life at that point.

Sorry if I'm rambling a bit—I haven't been online in so long that I'm just letting everything out at once.

Kyle: No, it's good! A lot of people have been waiting for updates. It's been over a year, and your advice from the older videos is still valuable. I know people who rewatch your streams because the advice resonates so deeply. But I imagine that giving advice can also be a heavy responsibility. Has that been a struggle for you, especially now that you're re-evaluating so much?

Luke: Yeah, it has been a bit of a struggle. It's not so much that I'm doubting what I've said before, but I'm in a different place now. For one, I'm still getting used to the concept of spiritual authority, which is something I didn't have as a Protestant. In Orthodoxy, there's always a hierarchy, always someone to guide you.

For example, I have a friend—people watching may know him as Luther from Transfigured Life on YouTube. He and I have met in person, and I really admire that he almost always makes videos with a priest or gets approval for his topics.

I've already spoken with my priest about continuing to make videos,

and he's supportive of it. But I want to be cautious. I don't want to say anything that's misinformed or that could lead someone astray.

Another thing that weighs on me is making sure people don't treat Orthodoxy as a fad. I have a friend who attends an Antiochian parish, and the priest there has an interesting approach. He says that if someone is a theology nerd or comes with a lot of intellectual baggage, they'll likely have to remain a catechumen much longer.

It's to ensure they've truly left behind whatever issues or misconceptions they're bringing with them. The priest also wants to confirm their conversion is genuine and not just some passing phase.

That's something I think about a lot. I just want to approach this with care and responsibility. That's really what it comes down to.

Thank God for the numbers of Orthodox converts in recent years. It's such a blessing. The parish I go to used to be in a doctor's office. They had to set up in a doctor's waiting room every weekend. At hte same time, we need be careful, especially when thinking about the next generation. We have to ask ourselves if America is ready for Orthodoxy.

Because America really is just a demonic country, and unfortunately to live an Orthodox life, even to do the *bare minimum*, you have to just fight against the grain. May God's grace be with us, but we have to set up the next generation properly if we'll have any hope for the future. We have to make sure the next generation doesn't have the same baggage that some of us converts (or even some cradle Orthodox growing up in this demonic environment) might have.

For example, a former Protestant who converts to Orthodoxy might read a prayer to the Theotokos, and they might have this nagging voice in their head like, "Actually, you're not supposed to do this!" This voice is evil and should be discarded, as it ends up becoming a hindrance to the spiritual life.

What I mean by this is that ideally, we would be raised in a good environment to begin with. Children's minds are fertile soil, so we need to plant the seeds of good fruit over bad fruit. If we plant good seeds and they bear good fruit, it prevents these theological mini-arguments to take

place in people's minds as they're praying, for instance. But this principle extends to all aspects of the spiritual life. In theology, moral teaching, Orthodox pracice, there exists an error or heresy pertaining to each of these facets of Orthodoxy.

The reality is, Americans who are converting—who are becoming Christian in the truest sense of the word—have to realize they're going to be discarding a lot about their lifestyle.

The suburban, modern lifestyle is almost entirely incompatible—not just with human life in general, but with the Orthodox faith.

Imagine living in a traditional Orthodox country. You work leisurely throughout the day, and at a set time, everything shuts down. People have the option to walk to church for the Ninth Hour or other prayers. You can just walk there, hear a prayer, and it becomes part of the rhythm of your daily life. That's something we don't have here, and it's what we need to establish.

We need to live close to each other—not just in the same city but physically next to each other. We need communities where we can walk to church, walk to our fellow parishioners' homes, and have that natural integration of life and faith. That's normal life in a traditional sense.

But to attain that, we all have to make sacrifices. It's like the story of the Rich Young Ruler. He comes to Christ and asks, "What must I do to be saved?" And Christ says, "Easy: sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and follow me." The Rich Young Ruler couldn't do it. He cries and walks away.

In a way, I feel more fortunate than the Rich Young Ruler. I told you before, when I was 25, I "lost everything." Everything I was building in my life just fell apart. But you know what? That was a blessing. If God had just taken away all the temptations and distractions from the Rich Young Ruler, that would've been a blessing for him too. It sounds bad, but it's actually great.

That's the mindset we need. People need to embrace that. I've always been a proponent of self-sufficiency and independence, even before I be-

came Orthodox. But now, it feels even more urgent. You only want to keep one toe in the world, and that's just so you can fulfill your obligations—maybe make a little bit of money. But you have to be ready to leave it all at a moment's notice.

That applies to me too. I have property and live in a particular place, but if push comes to shove, and I have to sell everything and move, I need to be ready for that.

And um, so this is something that ties into the spiritual struggle we all face. The world doesn't just have evil in it—it has something even worse: distractions. There are these "good" things that aren't quite as good as they seem. They pull your nous, your attention, toward stuff on the internet, stuff that doesn't matter.

By all means, if you're watching this and you're just wasting time or whatever—**don't**! Turn it off! There's that constant temptation in front of us, all the time, with the distractions and comforts of modern life. Honestly, the main sin of America is probably just this love of comfort. People think, "Ugh, I don't want to be bothered with this. I just want to keep doing what I'm doing."

Kyle: Yeah, that actually leads into my next question. When I started to become Christian, I got really into minimalism and living below my means. I realized I don't need a lot of stuff to be happy, and consumerism was really destructive for me.

I used to buy a lot of random stuff—like I bought a ton of manga. And then I'd sit there like, "Why did I just buy 50 volumes of this?"

Luke: (Laughs) Woah, cringe!

Kyle: (Laughs) Yeah, it's super cringey. Plus, I started to think of money as my time. Why waste it on consumer goods when you could buy something like land? Something that actually helps you become free.

That's one thing I appreciate about your videos—that's how I first found them. You talk about how to stop being a "wagy," live in the country, and make the most of what you have. You mentioned things like the ThinkPad, the "ThinkPad" of cars, and credit card churning.

All these strategies you talk about make your money go further while living below your means. It's inspiring because you really don't need much to be happy—if you have God and your community, that's enough. If you focus your time on living below your means and investing in things that make you free, it's a much better way to live.

So my question is: did you always have that mindset of living below your means, or did it develop after you lost everything?

Luke: I think I always had that mindset, even before losing everything. It's probably part of my personal disposition. When I was younger, I remember thinking about how Millennials are basically split into two camps.

There are the constant spenders—they're blowing money left and right, buying coffee every day, splurging on stuff they don't need. Then there's the smaller group, and I'd say I was part of that group. These are the people who are like, "Let's see… can I live in a 10-by-20 box for the rest of my life?"

That was kind of me from the start. When I was 18, I remember thinking, "Okay, I have a car. Could I live in this car if I needed to?" That's just how my mind works.

This can be a vice too, however. For example, if you want to be financially independent, it can make you greedy in the process. Sometimes I can be greedy, in the sense that I look for ways to exploit certain things for personal gain, and I think that can be a vice. I think the goal is to be in a physically close community of people where you don't *need* the normal ins-and-outs of life, like you don't need to drive 20 minutes to spend $20 at the store *just to do something basic*.

People still do this today. In the West, we have the Amish, but in Orthodox societies there exists the Old Believers, which are essentially the eastern counterpart. They wear traditional clothing, they live in close communities, etc. They're just fundamentally different from the ordinary Western way of living.

For example, you'll read about the Amish, and say they want to build a house. What happens? They all get together, build a house over the

weekend, and done! There's no debt, no unnecessary spending, all the labor is done, and everyone knows how to do it because they've done it a million times, you get a free house, and you give back by participating in the construction of everyone else's houses.

That's not just an Amish quirk! I mean, people—everyone used to do this, you know? Everyone. This isn't just some weird Amish thing. This was just human life. And we've lost it. We've totally lost it.

Even more than that, I think it's really important to have the mindset that any property you buy should ideally stay in your family for as long as possible. Like, if you have land—if you have 5 acres or something like that—your goal should be to build houses for all your kids there, you know what I mean?

That's the mindset we need to have. It's very different from how people think today, but it's so much better. So much of the pain in the modern world is self-imposed. We choose to live these painful, sinful lives.

And ultimately, sin isn't fun. It's not joyful. There might be fleeting enjoyment, but... I think in most cases, people need to be more true to what they know deep down is the right thing to do—the thing that's going to bring real peace and meaning.

It's like what I said earlier about growing up Protestant. There were so many things I experienced growing up where I'd think, "This is kind of weird, isn't it? Is this really how we're supposed to worship God?" Like, Vacation Bible School stuff, where you're dancing and goofing around with all these bright colors. You have this natural reaction: "This doesn't seem right."

And that applies to more than just faith. It applies to everything. Take schooling, for example. I'm a big proponent of what's called unschooling, which basically means, don't send your kids to school. Let them learn naturally.

If a kid has intellectual aspirations, they'll naturally come across the things they want to learn. If they don't, they don't need a massive formal education. Schooling is a great example of something so unnatural.

You take kids, stick them in a classroom for eight hours a day, and then wonder why they don't behave. It's because what you're doing to them is unnatural—and, in a way, it's evil.

And then the response to that bad situation is just as bad: "Oh, they're not behaving? Let's give them Ritalin or drugs." So not only is the stimulus bad, but the response to the stimulus is bad too. It just gets worse and worse.

That's why it's so important, as I said earlier, to have a mindset where[5] if you're going to be in the world, just dip your toes in a little if you need something. The rest, you should be able to leave behind at any point, you know?

What's really sad is when someone's 10 years into a career and they feel like they can't get out. That's sad. I mean, that is slavery. It really is slavery. It's being a slave to the world—in the bad sense of "the world."

Kyle: Yeah, definitely. And schooling is a big part of the problem. It doesn't actually teach people real skills. Instead, it fills them with facts that aren't applicable to their lives. There's so much truth in the idea that people with aptitude will naturally seek out what they need.

I know many people who were homeschooled, and they're high achievers. They didn't need to sit in a classroom for eight hours a day. Especially now, with what's being taught, it's not only unproductive—it's destructive. The system doesn't aim to create free, independent individuals. It's just about socializing them into a certain mold.

And the system disconnects people from basic, essential tasks—things humans used to know how to do. Building a house, growing food—these were once universal skills. Today, the average high schooler wouldn't even think, "I could build a house." They see all the regulations, the bureaucracy, the complicated tools, and they give up before they start.

But it doesn't have to be so complicated. Look at the Amish or other traditional communities. They build things simpler, and it works. We've overcomplicated everything. And houses today—they're enormous. The

[5] Luke notes he struggles with this as well.

square footage just keeps going up, and with that comes the need for skilled labor. Of course, a huge house is going to take more time and effort to build.

I think the core issue here is what you might call toxic individualism versus a healthy form of collectivism. As Orthodox Christians in America, we should see ourselves as part of a collective—on a local level. These are the people who will impact your life the most.

We need to connect with them deeply, keep wealth within our communities, and stay as uninvolved with the world as possible. We shouldn't want to be like the world. The world inflames our passions and distracts us from what really matters.

Luke: Exactly. The hard part is that to get to this point, we have to make sacrifices. It's not easy, especially at first. But once you're there, it does get easier. The more you live that way, the simpler it becomes.

I remember one of my old videos—it wasn't necessarily one of the most popular ones, but I think it was one of the more impactful ones based on the responses and emails I received. It was called something like, Will You Ever Stand Up for Yourself?

And that ties into what I was saying earlier about people giving in. For example, with the COVID vaccine—when people said, "I don't want to get it, but I have to because of work" or whatever.

What really frustrated me was that mindset of giving in. I did a video about this a couple of years ago. My point was, if you give in now, it sets a precedent. Next time there's a new mandate or requirement, it'll be even harder to resist because you've already let them dictate your actions.

Kyle: Yeah, it's like a slippery slope.

Luke: Exactly. Standing your ground now—even if it costs you something—makes it easier to resist in the future. And, honestly, I'm grateful I made tough decisions earlier in life. I lost a lot when I was 25, but that was better than losing it at 30 when it would've been even harder. Property's more expensive now; things are just worse.

But that's the problem—people aren't willing to make sacrifices. They don't see that resisting early actually makes life easier later on.

Kyle: That's true, and it seems like people get caught up in this cycle where they think they have no choice.

People see the corruption in the world and they seek alternatives.

Luke: Actually, I would take issue with the alternatives too. I'm not sure how to explain this, but "alternatives," like political solutions (but even in alternative technologies or methods), at times constitute a form of slavery—not just to systems like government or corporations, but to the world and its distractions. That's what makes it so dangerous.

But ultimately, these things are spiritual distractions. They get people invested in things that they feel like they can affect, but they can't, and they lose focus on what really matters. You get so involved in the politics, you start rooting for a team, but we're not supposed to be part of that. It's not for us to be overly invested in politics or these systems—it's a distraction.

We aren't exactly in a position to combat the principalities in power. People get invested in distractions because they feel like they can affect things, when that may not be the case.

Another example is in technology. People often ask me, "Hey, Luke, you're into free software. What's a good alternative to Twitter or Reddit?" and the truth is, there are some alternatives, but the better advice is to stop using those things entirely. Just close the screen.

Kyle: These things, like social media and the news, are meant to sedate us. They're distractions, the modern-day version of bread and circuses. They shouldn't be the defining elements of our life.

Instead, we should be focusing on the people around us—our family, our local church. That's what matters. The more people obsess over politics—whether left or right—the more they get stuck in a hopeless mindset, like they can control the world, but they can't. There's this illusion that if they just win the next election, everything will be better, but that's not the case. Sure, there can be good outcomes from elections, but they should never be the center of our hope.

Ultimately, the most important thing is our repentance. That's what will matter in the end. Not how much we cared about political issues, but were

we Christlike? Were we humble? That's what counts at the final judgment.

Luke: And especially when it comes to politics—it's so complicated. The world is so complex that individual humans can't really grasp all the consequences of a policy change. Some things are clear, like abortion being demonic, but even then, it's not always clear how someone in power will act. Maybe one leader might be more likely to act on that, but they might make other decisions that are worse in different areas. Ultimately, I'm not qualified to be the one who decides what's best for the world, and I'm definitely not a Spirit-bearing Elder.

I think it's very unwise to be emotionally attached to things like that. I'm not saying I'll fault someone for voting or engaging in elections; it just feels *weird*. It's just that I become wary of too much participation in things like that in general. But, most importantly, whatever you do, don't let it be a spiritual distraction. You have to focus on your spiritual life. You're not obligated to fix all the evil in the world. Your job is to defeat the evil within yourself. And that's really the struggle. It's hard enough to do that for yourself, so don't try to take on more than you can chew.

Kyle: Living in this modern age, being hyperconnected to everything, can make you feel like you can affect these global issues, but it's just a path to despair. The real approach is to focus on defeating the evil within yourself. That's what Orthodoxy teaches—if you want to save others, focus on your own repentance. Confronting your own sins every day is what truly matters, and it's a tough, daily struggle.

So, my final question for you: What advice would you give to young men, especially those in high school? I know a lot of younger viewers, like Zoomers, watch my channel. What overall advice would you give them for succeeding in life?

Luke: I'll give the disclaimer first: I'm no expert, so take this advice with a grain of salt. But there are a few things I've noticed that I think are important. One thing is, if you've watched my channel, you might've noticed that I've never done videos about girls or relationships. And there's a reason for that. Modern men are WAY too over-invested in that area.

I'm not saying all men should become monks, but I do think that one of the issues today is that a lot of young men's self-worth comes from their interactions with women or their pursuit of relationships. It's a vice for a lot of them.

The focus should be on developing yourself and not letting your worth depend on external things like relationships. So, my advice to young men would be to focus on building yourself as a person first—on your character, your skills, your spiritual life—before putting too much energy into anything else. That balance is key.

I would say a couple of things about that. First off, I think it's important to keep perspective. If you're a young guy, don't worry too much about it. You need to get a lot of things straight with yourself before you even think about getting married or having a successful marriage. One way to think about this is: imagine you're in your apartment or house, and there's a knock on the door. You open it, and it's the girl of your dreams. Are you even ready for her? Are you prepared? Because honestly, most of the guys who are constantly thinking about girls—they're nowhere close to being ready.

If you're a guy, you have a little more leeway with age, so you can be a bit older and still get married. It's not an issue. So, I'm really happy when I see young men who aren't constantly chasing female attention. That's a big relief. And guess what? You don't need to be obsessed with women. I actually think it's a bit of a scam that men are told they need to be constantly filled with desire and passions for women. If you look at other cultures, most cultures will say that women are inherently more romantic and sensual than men. That's pretty much a given assumption across the world. But here, we have the opposite idea, where men are told they need women all the time. And it's just not true.

So, my advice would be that, as a young man, you don't want to be running after female attention. A lot of men need to improve themselves, but at the same time, you don't want to be in a position where you're just seeking attention from women and doing foolish things.

Another thing I want to touch on, related to this, is the idea of men converting to the church. A lot of people talk about the rise in men converting to the faith in America, and there's often more men than women right now. But a lot of people talk about it like it's a bad thing. I get it, because some of these guys might be "thirsty," as I said. They're looking for women, and that can be a problem. But I think it's worth considering that maybe some of these guys are not meant to be married. They might be called to be monks or bishops. And I'm not saying that **you**, out there right now, might be worthy of something like that, because, keep in mind, if you grow up in a Protestant society, you may not even have the concept of someone living a full life that is both powerful and impactful, and still experiencing a lot of the joys of marriage, such as having spiritual children and making a big impact on the world. Even if you're living a life of prayer, there's so much fulfillment in that. You don't have to see this as a lesser option because of societal expectations.

There's a possibility that some of these young men should at least consider the alternative, which is a higher calling. For those who are called to it, monastic life is a truly higher calling. I've talked to men who've thought about it—like a guy I know who went to St. Mary of Egypt in Atlanta, which is a wonderful parish. If you're ever in the area, it's an amazing place to visit. He went to stay at the monastery there as part of an experiment to see if it was for him. After a brief time, he decided against it, but he was tonsured a reader and helped with the services. It gave him a taste of a fuller Christian life.

If you're a young man who's single, there's so much you can accomplish. In the Orthodox Church, for example, you typically have your prayer book with morning and evening prayers, and I would suggest talking to your priest or someone else about learning the hours of prayer. It's a great thing to do, and if you have a bit of extra time, like a longer lunch break or some time at home, you can pray an hour. It's a really beneficial practice.

If you're spending too much time on the internet, this is a whole world of prayer you can participate in. Whether you're going to be a monastic or

eventually get married, this will prepare you for both. If you get married, you'll want to have these habits already in place, so when you're praying with your wife or your family, it won't feel new. It will be something you've been practicing and can bring into your family life.

So, I'd say in general, whether you're going to be married or pursuing a monastic life, the core things you need to do are essentially the same: you need to distance yourself from the sensuality of the world. Men, in particular, often become over-invested in women, in desires, in things of this world. I think it's important to have that perspective and to at least contemplate the alternative of monasticism.

But don't just take my word for it; seek guidance from someone with real spiritual authority. Find a spiritual father, visit a monastery, and express your interest in monastic life. I've met people who have done this, including a convert I met at St. Mary of Egypt, who came from a liberal Jewish background. He had read a wonderful book, Brothers Karamazov—I don't know if you've read it, but it's a great book. Not just for the plot, though it has a beautiful plot, but it offers insight into an Orthodox perspective, showing what it's like to live in a society where people bless each other and lead lives grounded in faith.

This convert read Brothers Karamazov, got halfway through, and had such a powerful reaction that he felt compelled to convert. He eventually expressed interest in pursuing monasticism. While most people listening to this will probably be called to marriage, there might be a few who are called to something else. If that's you, I encourage you to consult a spiritual authority and explore that calling.

Another piece of advice I'd offer to young men—whether or not you're thinking about monasticism—is about reading Scripture. Yes, it's important to read the Bible and the readings of the day, but I think the best part of Scripture is the Gospels. One thing I've learned is that many people, myself included, read the Bible with the wrong mindset. Especially if you're a convert, you might approach the Bible from an argumentative or apologetic standpoint, reading it to prove a point or challenge others. "Oh, this para-

ble doesn't work with Protestantism!" Completely arrogant way of looking at things.

A *better* way to read the Gospels is to assume that whenever there's a "bad guy" in the story, *you* are the bad guy.

You are the Pharisees. You are the Samaritan woman. You are the woman caught in adultery. This kind of reading encourages humility and introspection. Approach the Christian faith with that same humility, and when authority is there, trust it. It's hard to go wrong if you adopt this mindset because it encourages you to constantly question your own impulses—even the ones you might think are good.

Yeah, like I was saying, there are impulses we have—like seeking independence, for example—that can seem good on the surface. It's natural to want freedom, but we also have to be careful. There can be something evil in that desire as well. So, it's important to stay vigilant and mindful of our motivations.

But the key message for men, especially young ones, is to focus on becoming the best version of yourself, particularly on the spiritual level. You don't have to go to a monastery right away, but maybe start with something smaller. Go on a pilgrimage, even just for a weekend. Just visit a monastery and see what it's like. You won't regret it. That time will be good for you, regardless of whether you end up being a priest, married, or a monk. At a monastery, you'll experience both physical and spiritual growth, and that's something you can carry with you.

Physically, it's also important to be close to other Orthodox Christians. Even if some are still figuring things out, it's vital to be near other believers, to build that community. At our parish, for example, we try to do little events like mid-week meals, just to get together and support each other. Ideally, we'd all live close enough to be physically near each other, but we may not achieve that in the next generation, especially in places like America.

Still, it's important to approach life humbly, without arrogance. And I think the best place to start is with the basics—actually going to church.

Kyle: That's why I always encourage people to use resources like the Orthodoxy in America Church Locator to find a local church. Get involved. Churches need help, whether it's as an altar server, a choir member, or on the church board. There are so many ways to contribute, and even if you only try it out for a while, it helps you get to know the people in your community.

And, as you alluded to earlier, especially in America, where everything is so spread out. But going to a church, you're actually going to meet your neighbors, and that's something really special.

I really enjoyed this interview as well. It was great to have this conversation. And I'd definitely be open to doing a part two, if anyone has questions or topics they'd like us to cover. Just leave them in the comments below, and we can plan for that in the future.

Thanks so much for having me on!